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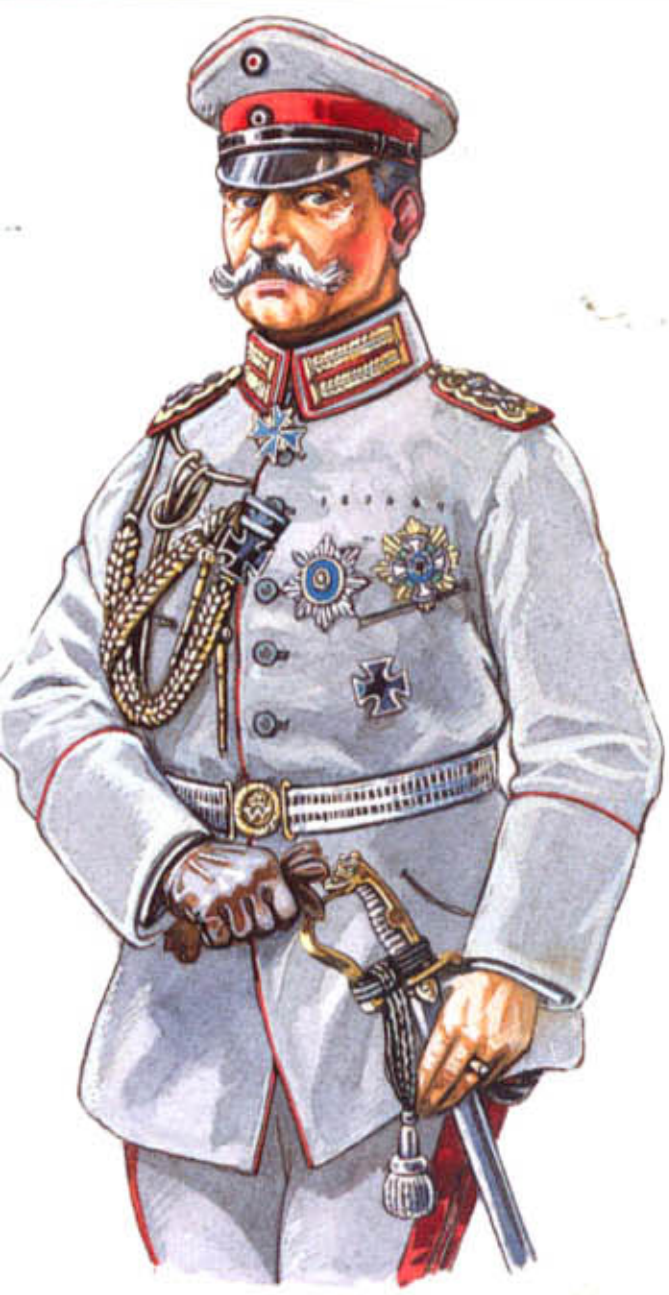
The Kaiser's Warlords

German Commanders of World War I



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First published in Great Britain in 2003 by Osprey Publishing
Elms Court, Chapel Way, Botley, Oxford OX2 9LP, United Kingdom
Email: **info@ospreypublishing.com**

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ISBN 1 84176 558 9

Editor: Martin Windrow
Design: Alan Hamp
Index by Alan Rutter
Originated by Electronic Page Company, Cwmbran, UK
Printed in China through World Print Ltd.

03 04 05 06 07 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

FOR A CATALOGUE OF ALL BOOKS PUBLISHED BY
OSPREY MILITARY AND AVIATION PLEASE CONTACT:
The Marketing Manager, Osprey Direct UK
PO Box 140, Wellingborough, Northants
NN8 2FA, United Kingdom
Email: **info@ospreydirect.co.uk**

The Marketing Manager, Osprey Direct USA
c/o MBI Publishing, 729 Prospect Avenue
Osceola, WI 54020, USA
Email: **info@ospreydirectusa.com**

www.ospreypublishing.com

Acknowledgements

The staff of 'Huis Doorn' at Doorn, Holland; Dr Jürgen Kraus, Bayerisches Armeemuseum, Ingolstadt; Dr Gerhard Bauer, Militärhistorisches Museum, Dresden; Dr Joachim Niemeyer, Wehrgeschichtliches Museum, Rastatt; Klaus-Peter Merta, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin; Mrs Ilse Bogaerts, responsible for the textile department of the Royal Army Museum in Brussels; and the staff of Hermann-Historica Internationale Auktionen, Munich.

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THE KAISER'S WARLORDS

IMPERIAL GERMANY ON THE EVE OF WAR

IN 1913, THE YEAR THAT Germany celebrated the centenary of the victory over Napoleon at the battle of Leipzig, the German Emperor Wilhelm II also celebrated his 25th jubilee and the wedding of his only daughter to Duke August of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. As the third successive emperor of the German Reich – a federation of over two dozen independent states, ranging from Prussia, covering some two-thirds of Germany, down to Hanseatic city-states and tiny duchies – Wilhelm II was simultaneously German Emperor, King of Prussia, and Supreme Warlord (*Oberste Kriegsherr*) of the Imperial Armies and Navy. As king, he appointed all royal officials in Prussia; as supreme commander, all military and naval officers; and as emperor, the Imperial Chancellor.

Wilhelm had every reason to be a happy man. Economically and in the fields of technology and applied science the Empire was booming, and Germany was the industrial giant of continental Europe. The Ruhr valley was the furnace of Europe's steel industry, and Saxony the laboratory of her chemical and optical industries. Harbours such as Hamburg and Bremen were about to challenge the British merchant fleet's supremacy in world wide maritime trade. But this remarkable growth in wealth and capabilities was not matched by the power of Germany's voice in international politics. Even though all the crowned heads of Europe visited Berlin in 1913 to participate in the celebrations, the emperor was painfully aware of this imbalance.

In 1888, Wilhelm II succeeded his father Friedrich III as German Emperor. Not yet 30, he was the arrogant and wilful monarch of a rich but adolescent empire. His love for uniforms was so great that he changed several times a day; here we see him in a Hussar uniform. An interesting detail is the bracelet worn round his right wrist. (Author's collection)

The 'old states' – Great Britain, France, Russia, Spain, etc. – were the major players on the international stage, partly as a result of their foreign imperial possessions; they regarded Germany's growing strength with suspicion, and excluded her from their political bargaining. The young Reich was looking for equal recognition – that 'place in the sun' to which she believed her new-found wealth and strength entitled her. Germany resented this exclusion keenly, and her response was the growth of extreme nationalistic sentiments. Organisations such as the Navy League, the Pan-German League and the Colonial League were created, supported by powerful industrialists such as Krupp and influential ministers such as Tirpitz and Bernhard von Bülow. A pillar of this nationalist mood was Germany's large modern army, founded on a tradition that stretched back more than 200 years.

Germany's military evolution

As long ago as the 17th century the Prussian Grand Elector Friedrich Wilhelm had organised a standing army commanded by an élite officer corps. His heirs and descendants improved its organisation and fighting capability. Early in the 18th century the officer corps consisted largely of aristocrats, mainly provided by wealthy landed Junkers, and in 1733 a cadet school was established to provide them with a professional training. During the reign of Frederick the Great the Prussian Army became the most feared war machine on the European continent, and its officer corps became the most privileged social class in Prussia.

However, conservatism and complacency led to decisive defeat at the hands of Napoleon's fast-marching French armies at Jena in October 1806. In the aftermath of this humiliating national shock the Prussian Army was totally reorganised under the guidance of men such as Scharnhorst and Clausewitz. Senior command became more accessible to talent rather than birth; recruitment, training and reserve service were systematically modernised; the composition and command of tactical formations in battle became more flexible, and the whole was guided by a newly created General Staff. Victory over the French in 1813, 1814 and finally at Waterloo in 1815 gave the army a renewed élan and prestige.

In 1830 and 1848 widespread revolutions terrorised the ruling classes of Europe, and in the latter year riots broke out in Berlin. The unrest was soon crushed by the Army; and this intervention finally ensured for the military the support and recognition of the ruling classes and bourgeoisie. The Prussian Army and its officers became the guarantors of the discipline and stability which the country sought. Now Prussia started a series of wars to consolidate her position in Europe. Defeating Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866, and finally France in 1870–71, the newly created German Empire, under Prussian leadership, became the leading military power on the continent. This reputation for invincibility raised the officers of the Imperial German forces to the highest level of social status. Over a few decades Prussia had suddenly become one of the major powers of Europe – a situation which many Germans found difficult to cope with.

In 1888 the newly crowned Emperor Wilhelm II, eager to exercise real power, dismissed after 30 years of brilliant service the old 'Iron Chancellor', Otto von Bismarck. Since the days of Wilhelm I this immensely shrewd statesman had always been able to further German interests while preventing the formation of anti-German coalitions. Bismarck had in fact been a restraining influence on the military; aware of their new status in the Reich, factions within the prestigious General Staff – *Oberste Heeresleitung*, OHL – had striven since 1866 and increasingly after 1871 to remove the Army from the

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE

The Kaiser was sometimes compared with a child whose favourite toy was the Army. Under the influence of Admiral Tirpitz, he also came to believe that a growing Germany needed a powerful Navy; he elevated himself to the post of Supreme Admiral of the German Empire, whose uniform was one of his favourites (see also Plate D3). He wears the dark blue full dress of *Grossadmiral*, with white cuff flaps and crossed lapels; in the standing portrait

he holds his smaller version of the grand admiral's baton. Wilhelm had large marshal's and grand admiral's batons, a smaller version, and an undress version that resembled a walking stick; most of these are now in the Doorn Museum in Holland. The close-up portrait seems to show a black silk mourning band on his upper left sleeve. These portraits are among the few in which Wilhelm's shrunken left arm is noticeable. (Author's collection)

overall control of the politicians. Bismarck had always succeeded in avoiding this; but as Germany started to become conscious of her growing might, the OHL began to pursue more aggressively and manipulatively their ambitions for greater direct power for the Army. From the 1880s onwards senior generals such as the then-Chief of the General Staff, Gen von Waldersee, intrigued to take effective control of the Army out of the hands of the Ministry of War. By the first years of Wilhelm II's reign the Reichstag (parliament) had lost all direct control over the military, and by 1914 even the Ministry of War had been reduced to an essentially administrative role.

In 1914 the Imperial German Army was one of the strongest in the world, consisting of 662,000 men, 15,000 one-year volunteers and 30,000 officers. It was organised into one Guard Corps and 21 *Armeekorps* (hereafter, 'corps'), including the armies of Saxony and Württemberg, while the Bavarian Army provided another three corps.[1] The supreme commander was the Kaiser; immediately subordinate to him and acting as his military advisor was the Chief of the General Staff.

The OHL

Germany had built an advanced army upon the foundation of universal conscription for a period of military training and service with the colours, followed by years of reserve service with a liability for recall at need, and an efficient modern system for general mobilisation of reserves in time of war. The training of the officer corps to lead this mass army was just as sophisticated. Military service to the state offered not only high social prestige but also a fine career; in 1914 around 50 per cent of staff officers were of noble birth, but the Army also attracted the most intelligent and highly educated members of wider German society. Believing that superiority in command would compensate for any shortcomings in the performance of the troops, the Army placed great importance on officer training; and the best that Germany could provide, chosen by a severe process of selections, were reserved for the prestigious General Staff Corps.

The only way to enter the General Staff Corps was by means of a three-year course at the *Kriegsakademie*. Every year only 160 vacancies were available for competition by a much greater number of candidates, which rose during the pre-war period to some 1,000 annually from all arms of service. All had to have at least three years' service, and entrance was by open competition (although in some cases the recommendation of a high-ranking officer might secure a place at the academy without undergoing the entrance exam). The top 20 per cent of examinees were

1 A corps ('army corps') normally comprised two infantry divisions, a cavalry and an artillery brigade; each division had two brigades consisting of two regiments. The brigade was a major-general's command; the division was commanded by a lieutenant-general; and the corps by a full general. A colonel-general headed an *Armeeinspektion* in the appointment of inspector-general, and in wartime commanded a numbered army or an army group of two or more armies.

admitted; but at the end of each year all students – including those who had entered the academy by recommendation – had to pass a further examination. After the three-year course came a final test to select officers for the General Staff – the so-called 'staff ride'. During a whole week in July the candidates would ride out to face tests of their capacities, knowledge and endurance. Those who passed were again graded according to their results. Only some 30 per cent of them were selected for the General Staff, the rest passing into the technical or administrative branches of the OHL; some became instructors, and those considered unfit were returned to their regiments.

After being selected for the General Staff Corps, the officers still returned to their respective regiments until the following March to refresh their familiarity with regimental duties. Thereafter a number of those who had passed with success were invited for a one- or two-year practical training at the Great General Staff in Berlin – the inner circle of staff officers who worked with the Chief of the General Staff at the Imperial Headquarters, and who were responsible for everything concerning operations, movements and intelligence. Their on-the-job instruction continued, and they were monitored for their capacity for hard work, concentration, handling of data and command capabilities. Once this probationary term was completed they were again tested, to select the best four or five officers to become permanent members of the General Staff.

The officers assigned to the OHL or to the staffs of the various field formations underwent a continuous programme of training by regular map exercises and staff rides. One of the famous exercises was the *Kriegspiel* or 'war game', a strategic indoor exercise that might last for months, under the personal supervision of the Chief of the General Staff. Even members of the Great General Staff were not spared from this continuous evaluation, which included twice yearly practical training in the field. In order to keep them in touch with field duty, staff officers returned from time to time to field formations to improve their practical experience of operations and tactics by means of large-scale manoeuvres, in which they handled realistic numbers of troops and quantities of matériel.

As commander-in-chief of the armed forces the Kaiser felt very comfortable among his troops. During the annual manoeuvres, although not a fine strategist like his father, he still insisted on commanding an army corps; but the *Oberste Kriegsherr*, with his limited grasp of tactics, sometimes managed to reduce the exercise to chaos. At the end of the annual manoeuvres trumpeters of the Leib-Gendarmerie played *'Das Ganze Halt'*; the drinking could then begin... In this faded but atmospheric group photograph the tall officer second from right is Gen von Moltke. (Author's collection)

This very high standard of training meant that German staff officers were promoted faster than their colleagues in the line. Advancement was by merit; this, together with a simultaneous policy of early retirement for the less high-performing senior officers, ensured that at any time a high proportion of former General Staff Corps officers were to be found among the senior commanders. This was in stark contrast to the armies of some of the other European powers, where many senior commands were filled either in accordance with simple length of service, or even – as in Austria-Hungary and Russia – at the whim of the monarch.

At the outbreak of World War I the General Staffs consisted of 625 officers, of whom 352 served permanently as members of the General Staff Corps: 113 were assigned to the Great General Staff in Berlin, and 239 to the *Truppen-Generalstab* (i.e. holding staff appointments with field formations). The German system of command was based on the doctrine of *'Führung nach Direktive'* ('directive command'): that field formation commanders should follow their own initiative under the guidance of and in pursuit of the objectives of the OHL. As long as they used the information provided by and pursued the overall goals laid down by the OHL, formation commanders down to divisional level could decide for themselves what actions to take to achieve those objectives. To ensure the success of this system, former General Staff officers were attached at the different levels of command. Since all were trained and thought in the same way and all were familiar with the OHL's strategy, and since many army and corps commanders were themselves former staff officers, the Chief of the General Staff could be confident that the different formations would act in accordance with his plans without his being personally present.[2]

Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, the Kaiser and Gen Ludendorff at the headquarters at Pless in 1916 or 1917. This propaganda picture suggests that the emperor was involved in planning the war together with his Chief of the General Staff and Grand Quartermaster; in reality he had long since lost any control he had ever had over military decisions. Note that Hindenburg's uniform, unlike that worn in Plate E1, bears regimental *Litzen* on both collar and cuffs. (Author's collection)

The staff in the field

At army level the staff was divided into four subsections:

Section I (Staff): Operations, orders, order of battle, tactics and training; areas, movements, traffic regulations, road control and maintenance; intelligence, air service and signals; ammunition supply.

Section II (Administration): In three different categories: (a) personnel, promotions, honours and rewards, leave; chaplains, lectures, regimental newspapers; supply, transport, clothing, boots and captured material; (b) organisation, establishments, strengths, returns, billeting, replacement of guns, ammunition and horses, counter-espionage and censorship, graves registration, and rail service; (c) interior economy.

Section III: Military law.

Section IV: Intendance, medical and veterinary services.

At corps, division and brigade levels the staff organisation was similar but with progressively fewer staff officers on each rung down the ladder.

At each level the formation chief of staff acted as the link to the next

2 In 1914 all army commanders except Gen von Kluck (1st Army) were former members of the General Staff.

senior chief of staff in the hierarchy, i.e. between the OHL and the army, the army and the corps, the corps and the division, and the division and the brigade. All messages and orders had to pass him first, and he could give orders in the name of the commander when the latter was not immediately available. In most cases the formation commander had to turn to his chief of staff for advice on operations. When the two established a harmonious relationship they supplemented each other and worked as a team. When this was not the case, the chief of staff – at any level – could resign his post without damage to his career.

The formation chiefs of staff worked with their commanders on a day-to-day basis in the direction of operations. A good army chief of staff knew his commanding officer's views and intentions and could 'see with his general's eyes'. He was familiar with the methods and doctrine of the supreme command, since he had been trained by the Great General Staff at Berlin and under the personal influence of its chief. He was familiar with the working of a corps, division or brigade, since he had held staff appointments at those levels in peacetime and had been responsible for arranging their manoeuvres. His training and experience therefore qualified him thoroughly to be his general's right-hand man.

One of many propaganda photos of the *Oberste Kriegsherr* in field-grey. By 1917 Wilhelm's only military function was distributing medals and pictures of himself while visiting the 'front' – some carefully selected destination far from the real world of shellfire, trenches, mud, rats and disease. See also Plate F3. (Author's collection)

In Berlin during the pre-war years the General Staff analysed operations and made changes to the techniques and tactics in use as and when needed. The small inner circle of the Great General Staff, working under the direct orders of the Chief of the General Staff, would provide expert specialists in transport, intelligence, artillery, aviation, etc., creating extremely talented soldiers such as Gen Ludendorff, Gen von Seeckt, Gen Groener, Col Max Bauer and Col Max Hoffmann, to name only a few. Together, they were a deadly war machine for planning aggression against Germany's neighbours, and invented the concepts which later came to be known as *'Blitzkrieg'*.

* * *

Political events in Europe during the first decade of the 20th century, seen from a perspective of imagined victim status, prompted an increasing German conviction that war was inevitable. Many generals and admirals, later to be joined by the emperor himself, became convinced that the Reich had to rise up in arms in order to protect itself against the threat represented by its neighbours' policies of surrounding Germany with defensive alliances. In 1912 some 110 socialist deputies were elected to the German Reichstag; and by the right-wing generals, industrialists and nationalist leagues this was seen as a reason to combine forces against a growing left-wing political influence. Most of them believed that a short and successful war would give them the power to control the growth of what they considered as a direct threat to their stable position. In December of that year the Chief of the General Staff, Gen von Moltke, was already briefing his generals that war was imminent.

Many believed that the sooner it came, the better for the Reich – that Germany's military advantage would continue to increase until 1916–17, but that she would then be overtaken by her neighbours. Apart from the ever-resentful France, they were particularly suspicious of Russia, with her infant but vigorously growing industrial economy and unlimited resources of manpower.

1914–18: *KRIEGSPIEL* BECOMES REALITY

On mobilisation the Army nominally came under the personal orders of the Kaiser, but in fact it was the OHL's role that was enhanced, taking over direct authority from the regional commanders and the Ministry of War.

In 1914 the Army could call upon an arsenal of which no general in the past could have dreamed, and over the next four years the technology of warfare would make unprecedented strides, which in turn would give birth to rapid advances in tactical thinking. At the outbreak of war in August 1914, however, a 19th century mentality still held sway. The infantry was the main arm of decision, and German generals were wedded to the offensive doctrine and to the importance of 'fighting spirit' over all other factors.

In Berlin, Gen Count Helmuth von Moltke ('the Younger', nephew of the victor of the campaigns against Denmark, Austria and the French Second Empire), was Chief of the General Staff. He had been chosen for the prestige his family name would reflect upon Wilhelm II, and because he did not have the character to resist the Kaiser's will. Moltke was more a peacetime general than a 'warlord', with practically no experience in field command. In 1905 he had succeeded Gen Count von Schlieffen, the brain behind a plan for conducting war on two fronts against Russia and France simultaneously. The long-prepared guidebook for this war was ready to hand in every detail: mobilisation, transport, logistics, and a day-by-day plan for progress into enemy territory. The plan was a model of the professional perfection to which the German General Staff was dedicated.

A pair of field-marshal's full dress epaulettes worn by Wilhelm II as an officer of the Guard Machine Gun Detachments displays the typical construction of such items. Heavy silver bullion twist fringe, gilt crescent, red pad and strap, the latter edged with silver/black braid, and gilt Imperial cipher 'WR' over crossed marshal's batons. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)

The Kaiser's car pennant used at Spa in 1918; this was a smaller version of the emperor's personal banner, which was carried with him wherever he went by a Leib-Gendarme (see Plate F). Gold-yellow field scattered with black eagles with red tongues and legs, and silver crowns outlined golden-brown; black and white central cross; darker gold-yellow central shield charged with black, red and white eagle, surmounted by darker gold-yellow crown picked out in golden-brown, with black and silver details; collar of gold crosses with black centres and silver eagles with gold lightnings. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)

The Schlieffen Plan was considered by the OHL as a counter to the probability that the outbreak of war with either Russia or France would immediately prompt the other to declare war on Germany in its turn. It foresaw that given Russia's primitive infrastructure, her huge but old-fashioned army would take at least six weeks to mobilise; so while Prussia's eastern borders were defended by the 8th Army alone, Germany would launch a rapid offensive against France through Holland, Luxembourg and Belgium. Once France was defeated – within an estimated 40 days – Germany could turn the bulk of her forces eastwards against Russia.

This meticulously planned strategy depended upon a rapid advance through the Low Countries by the great bulk of the German armies deployed on the right wing, passing north of Paris before turning southwards, and a simultaneous defensive posture by the left wing further south. However, Moltke had modified the plan: first he abandoned the idea of attacking through neutral Holland; then, uncomfortable with the idea of even a controlled retreat by the left wing from threatened Alsace into the Reich, he moved troops from the right to the left wing to counter the expected French offensive. Schleiffen had intended that the 'right hook' should be eight times as strong as the left flank; after Moltke's intervention it was only three times as strong.

Following the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo by a Serb nationalist, Germany urged Austria to declare war on Serbia; and from this moment a chain reaction occurred as the European powers, linked to each other by treaties of mutual defence, followed one another into declarations of war. The war parties among their politicians saw the time as ripe to settle long-standing disputes or to seize relative advantages. Berlin declared mobilisation on 1 August 1914, and the next day the full might of the Schlieffen Plan became visible. Two million reservists marched off to their local railway stations to board specially organised trains, hundreds of which crossed the Rhine every day heading for the western borders of the Reich. Most Germans were highly enthusiastic about a war that could surely last only a few months; they saluted each other with the slogan *'Gott strafe England!'*, to which the reply was *'Er strafe es!'*; it was going to rain *'Russenköpfe'* and snow *'Franzosenköpfe'*.

The spectacle of the chain reaction rippling across Europe gave even the Kaiser and his bellicose Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg pause. When the emperor asked whether the mobilisation could be reversed, Moltke nearly collapsed; he replied that once the trains were running they could not be stopped without causing utter chaos, unthinkable in the perfectly structured German Empire. The pre-war planning had indeed been excellent, and the whole apparatus of mobilisation functioned like a well-oiled machine – one of the factors that created the post-war belief in the excellence of Germany's Army and its OHL. Now, peacetime generals would have to face up to the realities of wartime demands.

1914: Advance in the West

Along the Belgian, Luxembourg and French borders, seven gigantic armies were concentrated ready to advance in a grand wheeling motion through Belgium and northern France:

Right wing: 1st Army (Generaloberst von Kluck)
2nd Army (GO von Bülow)
3rd Army (GO Freiherr von Hausen)
4th Army (GO Herzog Albrecht von Württemberg)
5th Army (Generalleutnant Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen)

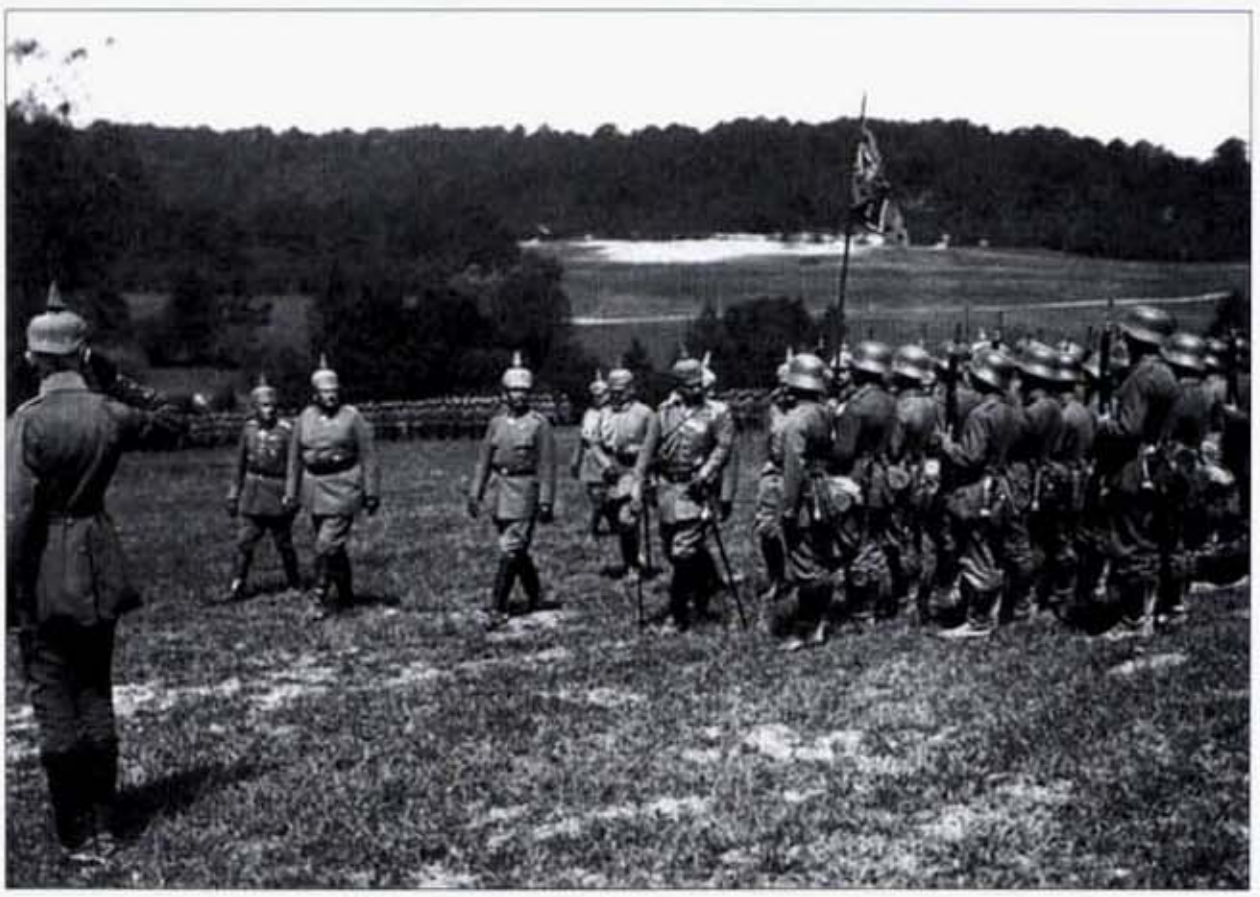
Left wing: 6th Army (GO Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern)
7th Army (GO von Heeringen)

The right wing's mission was to march into Belgium, taking Antwerp and Lille, and then to swing around Paris from the north, leaving the capital on their left. The left wing was to guard the Alsace border against the anticipated French attempt to invade the Reich. However, by redeploying troops from the right to the left wing the OHL had weakened the Schlieffen Plan.

At dawn of 4 August 1914 the German spearheads moved into Belgium to capture vital railway junctions, and the fortresses of Liège which defended the passage through Belgium to France.

Tiny Belgium behaved totally against the expectations of the OHL: the Belgian Field Army retreated on Liège, Namur and Antwerp, where they held out against repeated attacks, causing heavy losses and delays to the German timetable. However, the mighty German wave was still advancing, and every small success was reported to the home front as a major victory, with the beaten enemy in full retreat. Liège capitulated with the exception of its outer ring of forts, after causing heavy German casualties; one by one the forts were bombarded by heavy artillery and destroyed. Although a relatively minor episode that caused only a slight delay, the battle of Liège demonstrated that the most meticulous plans can be overrun by events: the necessary heavy artillery was not at first available where it was needed, and a lack of co-ordination became apparent. Nevertheless, the Germans still poured across Belgium, taking Brussels on 20 August and heading for the French border. Behind them they left a wide swathe of wanton destruction and a reputation for violence against civilians; several thousands were killed, mainly by deliberate execution as hostages.

To follow the armies' advance the OHL moved on 16 August from Berlin to Coblenz. From here they



This record of the Kaiser making a morale-boosting visit to the 'front line' shows his banner carried aloft behind him as he inspects the ranks. The new steel helmets and old marching boots probably date it to 1916–17. The generals of Wilhelm's entourage wear various models of tunic with and without exposed buttons and breast pocket flaps; they were free to retain older models and to wear the uniforms of their *à la suite* regimental commissions, so in practice there were almost as many variations in style as there were generals. (Author's collection)

The Bavarian Minister of War, LtGen von Hellingrath, wearing a field-grey M1910 *Feldrock* with slanted pocket flaps. This shows clearly the long poppy-red Bavarian general's collar patches with silver laurel-leaf embroidery (see Plate H). The buttons are also silver, and the lower cap cockade is light blue and silver. Narrow red piping can just be made out around the bottom and front edges of the stand-and-fall collar and down the front edge of the tunic. (Author's collection)

directed the broad strategy of the campaign, providing logistics, equipment, manpower, and information about the enemy to the different field commanders. The field commanders at all levels were free to act according to their own judgement of the situation, so long as the OHL's goals were achieved. This freedom, when coupled with Gen von Moltke's cautious nature, and the worsening communications as the distance between the front and the OHL increased, would create major problems.

Soon, organisational faults emerged within the General Staff that had escaped detection in peacetime. A lack of proper co-operation among the various departments would last throughout the first two years, until Gen von Falkenhayn's replacement as Chief of the General Staff in 1916. The problems lay in the subordination of various departments. For instance, the railway and operations departments were kept well informed of events; various other OHL departments were not so privileged, and frequently received news of developments only after long delays. The Ministry of War and some civilian authorities continued a policy of non-co-operation which was the result of years of manipulation by the OHL to become the sole arbiter of military decisions.

Even the Kaiser was left uninformed. As early as November 1914 he would say: 'The General Staff tells me nothing and asks me nothing. If they are under the impression in Germany that I am leading the Army, then they are very much mistaken'. This even applied to important events like the first poison gas attacks in 1915, of which the Kaiser had to learn from newspaper reports.

With troops held back to deal with the Belgian fortresses, and one corps each from the 2nd and 3rd Armies sent to East Prussia to reinforce the 8th Army (see below), the armies allocated to the 'right hook' through Belgium and northern France became weaker. Moltke's exercise of command generated widespread personal criticism, and he came under such stress that he was close to collapse. By giving the army commanders the freedom to make their own decisions within the confines of the overall strategy, he soon lost control over them, but he still attempted to intervene; and given the tenuous communications, he was simply too far away for his interventions to be positive. The explanation above of the General Staff system should not disguise the fact that many of the actual army commanders – in contrast to their chiefs of staff – had been chosen on grounds of seniority rather than of merit. Many were ambitious senior generals who resented being told what to do; some simply did not agree with the overall strategy, and therefore ended up failing to comply with it. For instance, General Karl von Bülow, although one of Schlieffen's pupils, was not a believer in the tactics of envelopment.

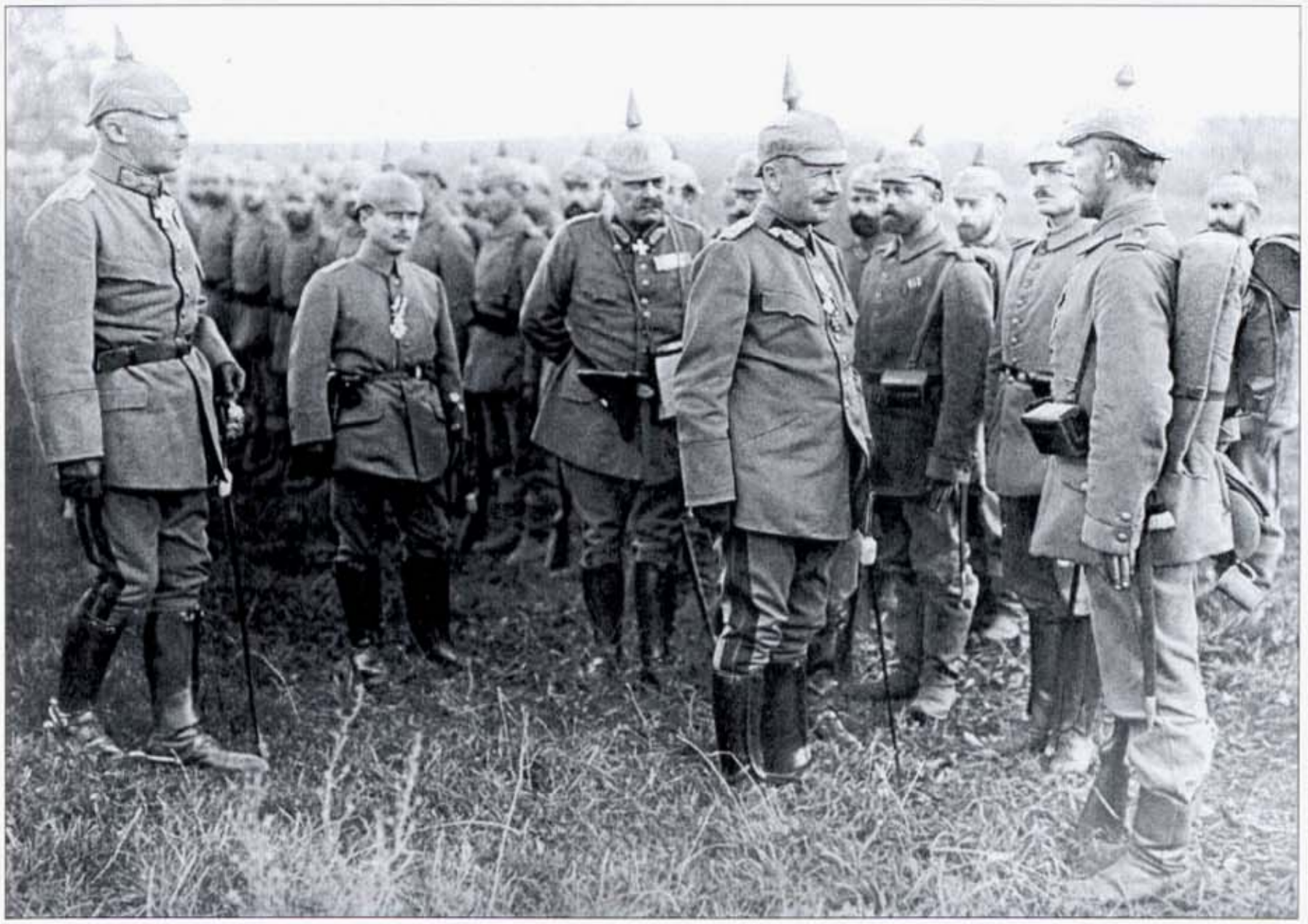
Failure on the Marne

While the French, due to Belgium's unexpected resistance, found time to organise themselves for the 'battle of the frontiers', on 17 August Gen von Moltke – now following the war from Luxembourg – tried to improve the co-ordination of the great 'right hook' by placing Gen von Kluck's 1st and Gen von Hausen's 3rd Armies under the overall authority of the 2nd Army's Gen Karl von Bülow. This would be one of his worst decisions:

both Kluck and Bülow were arrogant egoists who could not stand one another, and each was looking for a decisive battle to win. Bülow, attacked in his right flank by Gen Lanrezac's French 5th Army on 29 August, summoned help from Kluck, who was still on the outside of the great wheeling advance on Bülow's right. Tempted in any case to continue to attack Lanrezac, Kluck abandoned his march towards Amiens and changed direction south in defiance of Schlieffen's plan for enveloping Paris. While still east of the capital he marched his 250,000-strong army south-west in the hope of finishing off a beaten enemy, and crossed the Marne on 4 September. The OHL, believing the French beaten, passively agreed to the change which Karl von Bülow proposed. On 6 September the French attacked the 1st Army, forcing Kluck to bring two corps from his left to his right flank, thus leaving a wide gap between his and Bülow's armies. Now the weakening of the forces committed to the great right hook was felt, as other French and British troops pushed into this gap. Bülow, uncertain of the position of his troops, was forced to order a retreat, pulling the 1st, 3rd and 4th Armies with him.

Considerations of social rank and status also played their part in the failure of the Schlieffen Plan. During the advance the Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht – convinced, like most German commanders, that victory was within their grasp – also wanted a share of the glory for his Bavarians of the 6th Army. Placed in a defensive position on the left or Alsatian front, with the mission of actually withdrawing to lure French forces into danger, he asked the OHL to authorise an offensive. Despite

King Friedrich August of Saxony (centre) visiting his troops at the Western Front; note the 'Saxon' tunic cuffs of the soldier at right. The king wears a general's field-grey uniform with the Prussian collar patches. Only Bavaria and Mecklenburg-Schwerin kept until late March 1916 their own patterns of general's collar embroidery; thereafter they too introduced the Prussian *'Alt-Larisch'* style. The general at far left seems to display the original Mecklenburg-Schwerin oakleaf patch. (Anne S.K.Brown Collection, Providence, USA)



the irritating delays caused by Belgian resistance the OHL was sufficiently confident to grant this request; the prospect of a double envelopment of the French armies from north and south was tempting. Soon the Alsatian front would be appealing for more troops to replace the enormous losses suffered by the Bavarians.

The Schlieffen Plan had failed mainly because it was not flexible enough to accommodate unexpected delays or resistance; because of a lack of firm and informed control in the OHL's execution of the plan; and because of Moltke's lack of willpower to force the obedience of subordinate commanders. On 28 October the Kaiser wrote: 'We stand completely alone and must suffer defeat with dignity'. This was typically over-dramatic, but it was true that the only plan the Germans had had failed; they had torn up all other scenarios in 1913, and new initiatives would be hard to find.

In fact, by invading Belgium the Schlieffen Plan had the ultimately disastrous effect of bringing Great Britain into the war. This was a danger which German politicians had tried to avoid for years, but which the over-confident military – blinded by the small size of Britain's peacetime Regular Army – had neglected to take into account. The British Expeditionary Force of 1914 counted only five divisions; but in 1916, even before Britain introduced conscription, the armies of the United Kingdom and her Empire would have 55 divisions of volunteers in the front lines in France and Belgium.

Falkenhayn replaces Moltke

The response to failure was an internal conspiracy to replace Moltke. The chief of the Kaiser's Military Cabinet, Gen Lyncker, urged the Kaiser to dismiss Moltke and to entrust the Minister of War, Gen Erich von Falkenhayn, with the post of Chief of the General Staff. Falkenhayn was a tall, vigorous, good-looking man; he was as arrogant as most of the German generals, but balanced this with high intelligence and a sense of responsibility. While Moltke had had to deal with the build-up and start of the war, compromising between the wishes of the Kaiser, the crown prince and the field commanders, Falkenhayn – a stronger character – enjoyed more trust and support from the emperor than his predecessor.

Taking up his appointment on 14 September 1914, the new Chief of the General Staff moved his HQ to Charleville-Mézières. He found the German armies exhausted by their long summer advance (this was still, after all, a marching army), lacking matériel, and weakened by heavy casualties. The old tactics of advancing in close linear formations, which most serving generals had learned in 1870, had proved suicidal against modern weapons; the armies had lost large numbers of experienced officers who were hard to replace by well-trained reservists.

OPPOSITE **General der Infanterie Reinhard, Freiherr von Scheffer-Boyadel, commander of XXV Reserve Corps, had retired in 1913 at the age of 62; but this former *eminence grise* of the General Staff was recalled to active service at the start of the war, and became famous while serving in Mackensen's newly raised 9th Army. During the battle of Lodz in November 1914 his corps of some 50,000 men, complete with divisional and corps artillery, were cut off and encircled some 15 miles behind enemy lines by about 200,000 Russians, who had already ordered the transport to take the German prisoners away. Scheffer-Boyadel chose to attack the Russians eastwards rather than trying to break out to the west; the surprised enemy gave way, and XXV Reserve Corps marched north and then west, moving in an immense square formation. The corps rejoined the 9th Army on 26 November, after suffering only some 4,300 casualties but destroying every Russian unit which stood in its way, and taking about 16,000 prisoners and 64 guns. General Baron von Scheffer-Boyadel is seen here in the field-grey uniform of the Kaiser Alexander Garde-Grenadier-Regiment Nr.1 to which he received an *à la suite* commission. (Author's collection)**

Falkenhayn had to find a new strategy to save what he could from the Schlieffen Plan. With the idea of taking as much of the Channel coastline as possible in order to block British transports, he gathered in Flanders newly raised troops from Germany and units from other sectors of the Western Front. The newly raised reserve corps consisted mainly of retired officers, middle-aged men and students. Their motivation was good but experience was lacking. One reserve corps was sent to East Prussia, one to Lorraine; four others – together with Gen von Beseler's III Reserve Corps, which became available after the fall of Antwerp – would form the new 4th Army of Duke Albrecht of Württemberg, which would be the main force for the 'race to the sea'. Belgian resistance supported by the British Expeditionary Force stopped the German advance around Ypres, and by 20 October 1914 the race was over. The German casualties were horrendously high, and the first complaints about Falkenhayn's tactics were made by the German crown prince and Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.

With the advance in the West halted, and no new strategy in mind, the German armies settled down along a virtually static 400-mile front between Switzerland and the English Channel, digging the first of what would become a massive and sophisticated system of trenches the like of which the world had never seen. This defensive position would be held until the moment came for a new grand offensive more than three years later.

1914: The Easterners

At the same time as her defeat in the battle of the Marne, Germany won in the East perhaps her only decisive major victory of the war, at Tannenberg.

Taking much less time than the expected six weeks, the Russians attempted to ease the pressure on the French by invading East Prussia. This front was only defended by Gen von Prittwitz's 8th Army and, further to the south, by the middle-aged troops of Gen von Woyrsch's Landwehr Corps. General Rennenkampf's 1st Russian Army crossed the River Niemen from the east, and Gen Samsonov's 2nd marched up from the south into East Prussia. An indecisive battle on 20 August 1914 at Gumbinnen sent Prittwitz retreating into East Prussia to avoid encirclement, and appealing for reinforcement against the Russian hordes. At this stage still confident about the outcome of his campaign in the West, Moltke transferred the four divisions of XI and Guard Reserve Corps to the East.

Completely familiar with all possible scenarios, and knowing of the mutual dislike that would probably prevent the two Russian generals collaborating effectively, Col Max Hoffmann, the senior staff planner of the 8th Army, briefed Prittwitz and his chief of staff Gen von Waldersee that a full retreat towards the Vistula would be an unnecessary mistake. He suggested slowing down Rennenkampf's advance with a small force while sending the bulk of the 8th Army to attack Samsonov. Only three weeks into the war, Gens von Prittwitz and Waldersee were both relieved of their posts and replaced by Gens Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff respectively.

Hindenburg was a 67-year-old Junker, a veteran of Koniggrätz who had attained general's rank in 1905. He had retired from the Army in 1911; now, on 22 August 1914, he was recalled and sent to take

command of the 8th Army. His chief of staff Ludendorff was 49 years old, the product of a much humbler family from the same Poznan area. A member of the General Staff since 1894, he had worked on the Schlieffen Plan in the pre-war period; and only a week before this new appointment he had been responsible, as quartermaster general to Karl von Bülow's 2nd Army, for capturing the Liège forts. While travelling across Germany in a two-coach special train to take up their posts, the new army commander and his chief of staff were briefed on the situation in East Prussia, and came to the same conclusions as Col Hoffmann.

The first thing that Ludendorff did was to telephone the OHL that reinforcements from the West were not needed; however, the four divisions were already on the march, and so were unable to participate either in Ludendorff's revenge on the Russians or in the battle of the Marne. Waldersee and Hoffmann had already taken steps to save the situation, and on his arrival Ludendorff had only to give final orders. During a campaign that started on 23 August and ended a week later, he defeated the Russian 2nd Army at Tannenberg, inflicting 125,000 casualties including 90,000 prisoners, for a loss of some 15,000 Germans; Gen Samsonov responded by shooting himself. East Prussia – homeland of the Junker class – had been saved from occupation; it was the sort of victory Germany craved, and the 8th Army commander and his chief of staff became demi-gods in the Reich. (Ludendorff's former friend Hoffmann never got the credit he deserved. It was only on 7 October 1916 that he was decorated with the Pour le Mérite, and with the Oakleaves on 25 July 1917. He would stay on the Eastern Front, becoming chief of staff of the combined German armies under the supreme command of Prince Leopold of Bavaria. Hoffmann's only promotion would be to major-general in late 1917.)

By mid-September 1914 the 8th Army was reinforced to a level that allowed the formation of a new 9th Army commanded by Gen August von Mackensen. Ludendorff crafted a second victory, over the Russian 1st Army at the First Battle of the Masurian Lakes, which cost them another 125,000 casualties against about 10,000 Germans lost. The two victories had an almost Napoleonic élan; however, the outcome was not as decisive as Hindenburg had hoped – or as Ludendorff reported to the OHL. The temptations of national adulation were corrupting to this Prussian general of iron principles but humble background. Germany had found its heroes; and with the eastern theatre of war expanding rapidly, on 1 November 1914 Hindenburg was named commander-in-chief of all Austro-German forces in the East. Three days later, after he handed over his army command to Gen von Mackensen, he moved his HQ – *'OberOst'* – to Posen; and on 27 November he was promoted field-marshal.

1915–16: Distraction and attrition

By the end of 1914 several important figures apart from Moltke had left the stage. Kluck, wounded by shrapnel, would retire from active duty; Hausen was relieved from his command, and Karl von Bülow, promoted field-marshal, retired on the grounds of ill health.

Soon a conflict between the new key players would divide the German Army between 'Easterners' and 'Westerners'. The former were led by Hindenburg, Ludendorff and the Austro-Hungarian chief of staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf; the latter, by Falkenhayn supported by the

Kaiser, who detested Ludendorff's arrogance and was jealous of Hindenburg's increasing public popularity.

After three months of war, Ottoman Turkey became an ally of the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Its army would be supervised by the German Gen Otto Liman von Sanders, who would be the defender of the Dardanelles against the British invasion attempt of 1915; and Adm Wilhelm Souchon would supervise the Turkish Navy. In May 1915 Italy entered the war on the side of the Entente, diverting Austro-Hungarian troops from the Eastern Front; and the Balkans also remained a distracting sideshow, with tiny Serbia defying the Austro-Hungarians. The capabilities of Germany's allies were not of the same order as those of the German armies, and increasing numbers of German troops had to be sent east and south in order to stabilise the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish fronts.

In 1915 it was believed that the Eastern Front offered the chance of decisive success; but despite huge Russian losses, the fighting would drag on along this vast front in a series of see-saw offensives and retreats (largely by the Austro-Hungarians) throughout 1915–16. Meanwhile in the West, Gen von Falkenhayn pursued at first a defensive strategy, apart from a limited attack at Second Ypres in April 1915. The Allies responded with a series of costly and failed offensives in Artois, Flanders, the Argonne and Champagne. As the year ended Falkenhayn prepared for a new offensive, but not with the aim of achieving the decisive break-through that might have been possible in spring 1915. His appreciation was that if penetration was not possible in trench warfare, then the correct strategy was attrition: a prolonged killing match on a limited sector of the front, in which victory would go to the side which could endure longest.

Since this was likely to be unpopular with both commanders and troops, Falkenhayn kept the ultimate goal of his campaign to himself; the field commanders were therefore under the impression that they were intended to win and hold territory. Falkenhayn selected as his battlefield the French-held salient around Verdun on the River Meuse, a city which had emotional importance for the French people and which they could therefore be expected to defend to the death. The plan was to keep sending in successive attacks with heavy artillery preparation, thus drawing French reserves into a ghastly mincing machine. Launched in February 1916, the battle of Verdun achieved the aim of attrition all too well; by the time it ended in December the greater part of the French armies had fought there, at a cost of nearly 380,000 casualties – but the Germans had also lost nearly 360,000 men, and had lost all the captured ground.

Crown Prince Wilhelm in his car. Like his father, he was very interested by cars, and Mercedes became the 'house brand'. Here he is seen sitting at the wheel; he is accompanied by a chauffeur and a servant, each wearing a peaked cap with a silver-white band embroidered with a repeat pattern of black Prussian eagles. Note the horseshoe tucked under the strap of the stowage case – for luck? (Collection of the Royal Army Museum, Brussels, Belgium)

Meanwhile, to ease the pressure on Verdun the British and French had launched their Somme offensive in July 1916. This dragged on until October, making only limited gains at the cost of nearly 420,000 British casualties and another 200,000 French; but it cost Germany an unconfirmed but probably equally high price (German casualty figures were deliberately suppressed). By that time the failure of his Verdun plan, and his inability to co-operate with the Austro-Hungarians, had also cost Falkenhayn his appointment.

The Kaiser had continued to lose influence and was increasingly sidelined, but for the second time a Chief of the General Staff was ousted by a plot led by the emperor's Military Cabinet – this time supported by the Austro-Hungarian chief of staff Gen Conrad von Hötzendorf, the conservative political parties, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Even Crown Princes Wilhelm of Germany and Rupprecht of Bavaria supported the idea of replacing Falkenhayn with the 'new Siegfried', Paul von Hindenburg, who arrived on the Western Front early in September 1916. He was accompanied by the man who would in fact exercise effective command until the end of the war – Erich Ludendorff.

Although appointed Chief of the General Staff, Hindenburg would become not very much more than an impressive figurehead. His tall stature, bulldog features and courtly manners became a symbol for embattled Germany – he and he alone could lead the Reich to victory. In fact, at the age of 69 the once-brilliant commander who had dared to beat the Kaiser during annual manoeuvres had begun to lose his grip, and as time passed he was content to leave most practical tasks to his formidably energetic deputy. He remained silent during staff meetings, and the only opinion he would voice afterwards was that Germany must trust in God. The General Staff preferred to put their trust in Ludendorff. With the title of Grand Quartermaster General, he would sign all orders and directives in Hindenburg's name, and his influence – though not his competence – came to extend well beyond purely military decisions.

Field-Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, carrying the undress baton of his rank and wearing the general's *Paletot* over a tunic with regimental insignia (see Plate E1). His image of steadiness and solidity was re-assuring to the German people. (Author's collection)

1916–17: Ludendorff takes over

After inspecting the Western Front in September 1916, Ludendorff admitted that the German Army had been 'fought to a standstill and was utterly worn out'. Many insiders considered that the war was lost for Germany. The British naval blockade was denying her raw materials and food; despite the ingenuity of German industry in developing new 'ersatz' synthetic materials for making military equipment, food rationing became necessary. In winter 1916/17 the German people suffered real hunger for the first time, and social tensions grew. However, there was as yet no mass movement for peace: after the huge sacrifices already made the national mood demanded revenge and victory. Increasingly, voices were raised urging unrestricted submarine warfare – i.e. the sinking by U-boats of all neutral vessels trafficking with the Entente powers; for the past two years the right-wing parties had been arguing the use of this weapon against Britain. Although its main military supporter, Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, had been dismissed in March 1916 for the failure of his naval policies, such influence as he retained was thrown into convincing the authorities of the U-boat's potential.

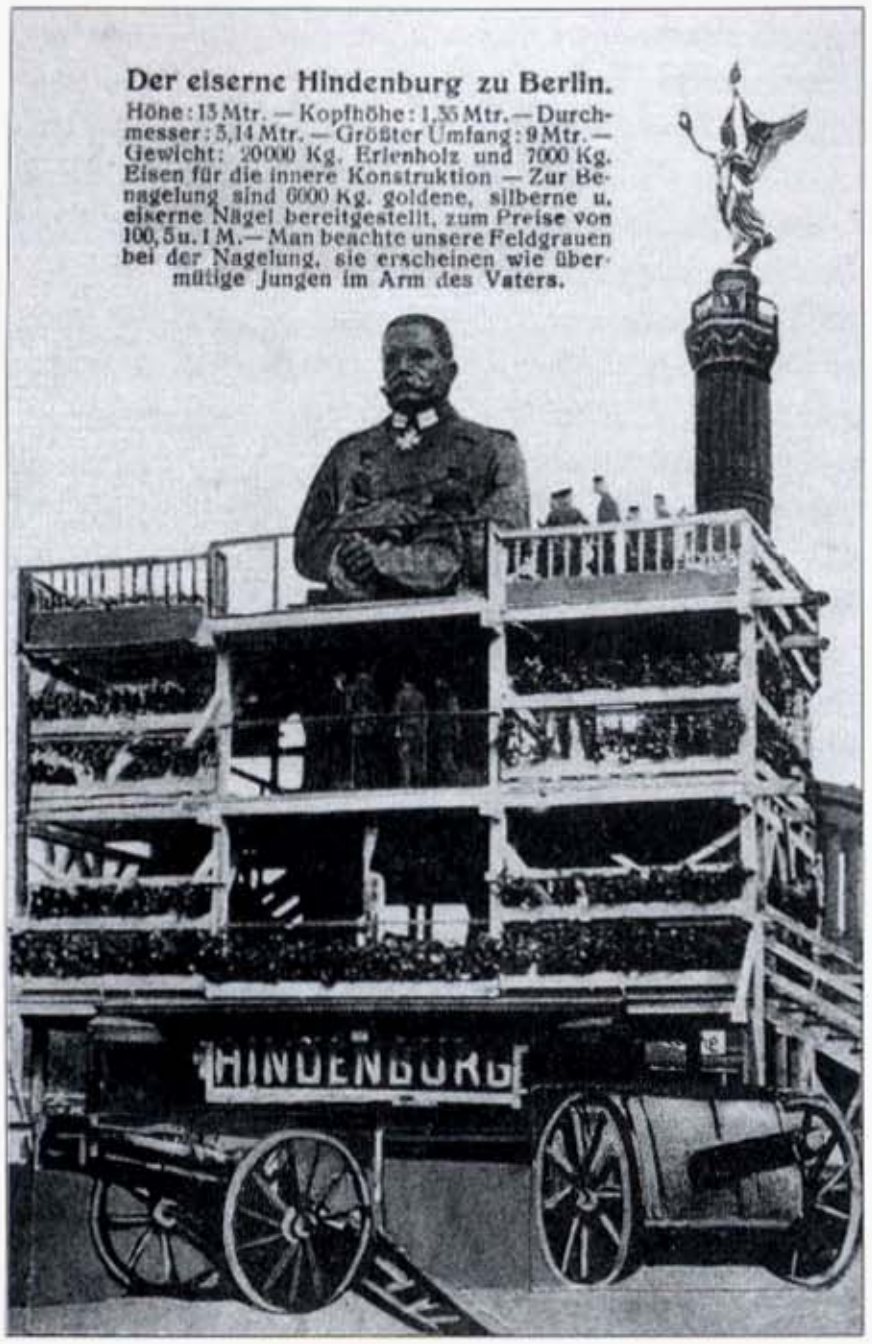
The Kaiser too was slowly persuaded; although lacking any real power over the military, he eventually agreed to declare an unrestricted U-boat campaign from February 1917 – a disastrous step, which would bring the United States into the war that April.

During a period of relative stalemate in the West the situation in the Balkans and on the Eastern Front was improved. German armies regained Russian territory lost by the Austro-Hungarians; Romania was defeated shortly after declaring war, and the Balkans were stabilised. During these campaigns a new rising star emerged: August von Mackensen. Promoted to field-marshal and commander of an army group, he enjoyed greater favour from the Kaiser than Hindenburg and Ludendorff (thus earning their jealousy), and was therefore appointed to important multi-national commands of German, Austro-Hungarian, Turkish and Bulgarian forces.

During 1917 Ludendorff remained on the defensive in the West, shortening his front in early spring by strategic withdrawals of some 25 miles to the prepared defences of the so-called 'Siegfried' (Hindenburg) Line. The large and growing BEF made attacks that achieved only limited advances at high cost, around Arras in April-May and in the third battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) in September-November. Meanwhile the French Gen Nivelle's Aisne offensive on the Chemin des Dames in April-May also achieved only limited gains, at a price that provoked widespread mutinies; the refusals by French divisions to undertake any further attacks threw more strain onto the BEF and allowed the German armies a respite. In October 1917, the German 14th Army (Gen Otto von Below) assisted the Austro-Hungarians to inflict a crushing defeat on Italy at Caporetto, forcing her armies back to the River Piave line, which would remain static for a year.

The Central Powers had one clear strategic opportunity: to defeat Russia, the weakest of the Entente nations. After the 'bourgeois revolution' of February-March 1917 overthrew the Tsar the Germans had hoped that Russia would make peace, but the new provisional government led by Alexander Kerenski agreed with the other Allies to continue the war. Now Ludendorff intervened in a way that would influence international politics until the end of the 20th century: in April he had the radical Bolshevik leader V.I.Lenin sent by train from exile in Switzerland to Sweden, from where he crossed the border into Russia. In the turmoil following the failure of their 'Kerenski Offensive' in July the Russian armies virtually collapsed; and on 7 November 1917, Lenin's Bolsheviks seized power. Hoping that a socialist revolution would also break out in Germany, and pre-occupied with taking control of the chaotic situation in Russia, in December Lenin requested a truce with the Central Powers. The negotiations were held at Brest-Litovsk, the German delegation being headed by Gen Max Hoffmann under Ludendorff's instructions. A peace treaty was signed in March 1918, leaving huge Russian territories under occupation or indirect control by Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Germany was suffering another famine, increasing industrial disruption and social unrest; the other federal states held Prussia responsible for prolonging the war, since Hindenburg and Ludendorff had refused every proposal for peace talks put forward by the Reichstag. Now, with the prospect of shifting large forces from the Eastern to the


Der eiserne Hindenburg zu Berlin.
Höhe: 13 Mtr. — Kopfhöhe: 1,35 Mtr. — Durchmesser: 5,14 Mtr. — Größter Umfang: 9 Mtr. — Gewicht: 20000 Kg. Erlenholz und 7000 Kg. Eisen für die innere Konstruktion — Zur Benagelung sind 6000 Kg. goldene, silberne u. eiserne Nägel bereitgestellt, zum Preise von 100, 5 u. 1 M. — Man beachte unsere Feldgrauen bei der Nagelung, sie erscheinen wie übermütige Jungen im Arm des Vaters.
HINDENBURG

After the victories at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, Hindenburg became a national hero in Germany, and his likeness was used everywhere to support the war effort. This is a wooden statue of him that was erected in Berlin, about 42 feet high and 7 feet across. To raise funds the public were encouraged to buy nails and hammer them in; a total of some 5.9 tons of iron, silver and gilt nails were sold. (Author's collection)

Western Front during the limited period that remained to him before the American Expeditionary Force – training in France – was ready for battle, Ludendorff predicted that 1918 would be the year of final victory.

The 1918 offensives

Although the immense territories gained by treaty in the East would still need at least a million occupation troops, for the first time in years the Germans again had a slight numerical superiority in the West. As well as a numerical advantage, the German armies had also improved their equipment and tactics. Prominent in this area since July 1915, Col Max Hermann Bauer (Germany's pre-eminent artillery expert, famous for his role at the Liège forts) became head of Section I of the General Staff, responsible for identifying and testing new tactics and equipment such as flamethrowers, trench mortars and infantry assault cannon.[3] The results were applied successfully on the Eastern and Italian Fronts. Verdun had proved the success of new assault infantry tactics by the 'Sturmtruppen', and these had now been disseminated down to regimental level.

On 11 November 1917, Ludendorff summoned all his senior staff and the chiefs of staff of each corps to a conference at Spa in Belgium. Opinions were widely divided over the possibilities of regaining the initiative and beating the Western Allies in a final offensive before the American contribution became decisive. Instead of a single major offensive it was agreed to plan the 'Kaiserschlacht' as five consecutive operations, to be followed by a sixth and final blow codenamed 'Operation Hagen'. The new tactics successfully tried out at Riga and Caporetto would be employed. Among specialist officers gathered for the campaign were Gen von Hutier, victor of Riga, and LtCol Georg Bruchmüller, an artillery specialist from the Eastern Front.[4]

On 12 March 1918 the Kaiser arrived at Spa, from where he would follow the progress of the spring offensives. In this hermetically sealed town lavish quarters were also prepared for Hindenburg and Ludendorff, complete with concrete air-raid shelters, and a web of telephone communications linking Spa with the administrative headquarters of the Western Front at Charleville and with various army and corps headquarters.

On 21 March, at 4.40am, German artillery opened fire along a 65-mile front between Arras and La Fère. After five hours of bombardment

3 An extreme conservative, Bauer became close to Ludendorff from the moment of his attachment to the OHL. He was involved in the successful plots to replace Falkenhayn, and the relatively liberal Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg; later he conspired against Ludendorff and even the Kaiser. A 'warlord' in his way, he served in World War II, finally dying of smallpox in Shanghai in 1956.

4 Bruchmüller (1863–1948) was nicknamed 'Durchburchmuller' – 'Break-through Muller'. His tactics of short, fierce artillery barrages with plentiful gas shells to temporarily neutralise enemy troops before an assault, rather than trying to destroy their positions, were successful in 1916 at Lake Naroch, and again in Gen von Hutier's attack at Riga in September 1917. On the first day of Ludendorff's spring offensive his guns fired 3.2 million shells, successfully opening the way for the Sturmtruppen. He was promoted major-general only in 1939.

by 6,500 guns and 3,500 trench mortars 'Operation Michael' was unleashed by three armies – Gen Otto von Below's 17th Army, Gen von der Marwitz's 2nd Army, and Gen von Hutier's 18th Army – totalling some half-million German troops in the 65 divisions of the army groups of the Prussian crown prince and Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. In three days the spearheads of Sturmtruppen penetrated some 12 miles, forcing a gap between the British 3rd and 5th Armies. Ludendorff's exploitation of this opportunity was confused, however, and despite startling local successes his armies were unable to keep up prolonged advances. Only about a quarter of his 206 divisions in the West were of the first quality; German losses were equal to those of the Allies, and their logistics were unable to keep up.

Four further operations were launched: 'Georgette' against the BEF south of Ypres on 9 April (6th Army, Gen von Quast; 4th Army, Gen von Arnim); and against the French, 'Blücher' on the Aisne on 27 May (7th Army, Gen von Boehn); 'Gneisenau' between Noyon and Montdidier on 9 June (7th & 18th Armies); and 'Marneschutz-Reims' on 15 July towards Epernay and Chalons (7th Army; 1st Army, Gen von Murda, & 3rd Army, Gen von Einem). These forced the front about 40 miles west and south in a huge bulge, to a line roughly from Ypres, through Arras, Villers-Bretonneux, Montdidier, Chateau-Thierry to Epernay and Reims; but although only 60 miles from Paris, the advances got no further. A new Allied supreme commander, Gen Foch, was given overall control; by June the British, French and – ominously – the American armies had blocked the German thrusts and were counter–attacking. By July the AEF had more than 450,000 men in France, and from now on Gen Pershing would put increasing numbers of his strong divisions into the front lines.

The front line German generals asked for more troops just to hold the ground they had gained, but there were no more to give them. As the enemy's strength and confidence kept growing inexorably, many began to advise that further offensive attempts were futile (among them Col Friedrich von Lossberg, the 6th Army chief of staff). Even the crown prince reported that his men were utterly exhausted and burnt out. While some troops new to this front, ignorant of the true strategic balance, believed German propaganda that the enemy were on the verge of collapse, among the more cynical veterans morale and discipline were breaking down; some divisions were more interested in looting Allied supply dumps than advancing further. By late July, Ludendorff seemed to have lost his grasp on the situation completely; although his 'Kaiserschlacht' had cost many hundreds of thousands of casualties he remained obsessed with pursuing the offensives at no matter what price, lashing out at his generals for their defeatism.

Field-Marshal August von Mackensen (far rear seat, goggles on cap) leaving his HQ in an open Mercedes. His rank is identified by the red metal plate painted with black and white quarters, mounted on the nearside mudguard – this system remained in use during World War II. (Author's collection)

The Allied counter-offensive

On 8 August – a date that became known as a 'black day' of mourning for the German Army – the Allies started their massive and co-ordinated counter-offensive. Hungry, tired and weakened by casualties, the German 2nd, 9th, 17th and 18th Armies were forced eastwards. Some former Eastern Front soldiers, infected by Bolshevik propaganda and more aware of the situation on the home front, began to murmur against their commanders. In Germany the former might of heavy industry was crumbling; spare parts were hard to find, and supplies of basic materials such as fuel and coal were failing. Hunger, cold and disease were ravaging the civilian population, with a consequent level of unrest which threatened actual revolution. As the armies retreated closer to Germany's borders, generals and troops alike were far from feeling that they had been defeated; but they knew the war could no longer be won.

On 14 August a royal council took place at Spa, where for the first time Hindenburg and Ludendorff confessed as much to the Kaiser. Hindenburg, out of touch with reality, still believed that a defensive front could be held long enough to buy Germany favourable peace terms in eventual negotiations, an opinion to which the Kaiser clung. A propaganda commission was created, to seal off the troops on the Western Front from events at home. From this date Ludendorff began to lay the foundations for the myth that the Army was being 'stabbed in the back' by politicians eager for peace talks.

Over the following six weeks Germany's allies began to collapse around her, and the situation on the Western Front deteriorated steadily. Weak units were still fighting stubbornly as they fell back, but every attempt to stabilise the front cost thousands more lives, and by the time the Hindenburg Line was breached on 5 October even Ludendorff had accepted the inevitable. He was determined not to be held to account for capitulating, however; the so-called 'Third Supreme Command' – the near dictatorship of Hindenburg and Ludendorff – now handed back responsibility to the politicians, recommending urgent peace talks to avoid further pointless sacrifice of lives.

On 3 October the peace advocate Prince Max of Baden was named chancellor, and at once sent a telegram to US President Wilson to the effect that Germany was ready to discuss terms. Wilson replied that there was no question of terms but only of German capitulation. Hindenburg, who still hoped to save Alsace-Lorraine and some eastern territories, found this unthinkable. The Allied advance was temporarily slowing down, and Ludendorff – recovering from an apparent nervous breakdown – began planning a new defensive campaign for 1919 and even new offensives. However, by now his popularity was at its nadir; the chancellor asked the Kaiser for his dismissal, and the monarch informed the Grand Quartermaster General on 26 October that his services were no longer required. (Hindenburg's failure to intervene on Ludendorff's behalf caused a lifelong rift between them.)

Appointed to replace Ludendorff, a Württemberg general, Wilhelm Groener, returned from the Ukraine completely unaware of the critical situations in Germany and on the Western Front. An air of unreality gripped the court at Spa where the Kaiser had fled surrounded by his generals, fearful of the pre-revolutionary situation in Germany. The Kaiser's authority shrank from day to day, while that of Hindenburg

steadily grew; but suggestions that the emperor abdicate were resisted, on the ground that removal of his symbolic authority might lead the armies to disintegrate into bandit gangs plundering their way homewards.

On 5 November, Hindenburg publicly affirmed the Army's loyalty to the Kaiser; but over the following week the Chief of the General Staff was obliged to reverse his position completely. Every day brought more news of military mutinies, of riots all over the Reich, of red flags raised and soldiers forming soviets, and of the *de facto* collapse of the Empire with the flight of the kings of Saxony and Bavaria from their capitals. Despite the OHL's determination to distance the military from the peace talks being conducted by the politicians, Gen Groener knew that an armistice depended upon the Kaiser's abdication. On the night of 8 November he summoned some 50 senior staff officers and field commanders to Spa and confronted them and the Kaiser with reality, speaking with a brutal freedom denied to Prussian officers: Germany had no credible military cards to play in the peace negotiations, and the troops probably would not obey an order to crush dissent in the name of the Kaiser. His words came as a shocking revelation to officers still determind to hold the line, who seemed unaware of the overall situation. Pre-empted by an announcement by Prince Max of Baden, on 9 November Wilhelm II abdicated as Emperor of Germany (though not as King of Prussia), and the next day he followed Hindenburg's advice to take refuge in neutral Holland. The field-marshal, now Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, would (somehow) save the honour of the Army, bring it home, and restore civil order, while at the same time avoiding civil war; he would then summon the king home again.

On 11 November 1918 the Armistice was signed, and on every front the guns fell silent. On 28 November the British forced Wilhelm II to abdicate the Prussian throne by the threat of bringing him before an international war crimes tribunal.

The highest German decoration was the Order Pour le Mérite, in gilt metal and bright blue enamel and worn from a black and silver/white neck ribbon. Created in 1740 by Frederick the Great (when French was the language of polite society throughout Europe), it was awarded 697 times between 1914 and 1918. Among these were 25 army commanders, 84 divisional commanders and 78 General Staff officers. The gilt Oakleaves were awarded 122 times, to 23 army commanders, 13 divisional commanders and 21 General Staff officers. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)

The aftermath

With the Armistice signed the OHL faced a monumental new task. In 15 days they brought some two million soldiers back from the Western Front within the borders of a disintegrating Germany, in good order and discipline. They retained their prestige and their authority over the officer corps and numbers of loyal front line veterans (indeed, there was even a major parade in Berlin – hardly the behaviour of an army which felt itself to be beaten). Even so, a high proportion of the rank and file soon drifted away homewards. In a situation of near anarchy the hard core rallied around the 71-year-old Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, and over the following months of chaos and violence they made themselves indispensable to the new Weimar Republic's Social

Democrat government led by Friedrich Ebert. The price they extracted was the government's promise to hold back from radical reform of the German officer corps.

The confused and violent events of the period between the Armistice and 1923 have no place in these pages, but are covered in detail in Elite 76, *The German Freikorps 1918–23*, by Carlos Caballero Jurado & Ramiro Bujeiro, to which readers are strongly recommended. Field-Marshal von Hindenburg resigned as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces on 25 June 1919 as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, which denied Germany a General Staff. General Groener left his post on 3 July of the same year; a few days later he was replaced by the former chief of staff to Field-Marshal von Mackensen, the inscrutable Gen Hans von Seeckt. This extremely able officer (nicknamed 'the Sphinx') became chief of staff of the Reichswehr, the 100,000-man peacetime army allowed by the Versailles treaty. At the head of the so-called *Truppenamt* – the title behind which a *de facto* General Staff hid from the Allies – Seeckt was entitled the *Chef der Heeresleitung*. By the time he retired in 1926 he had created the nucleus of an élite force, in touch with the latest technological developments and capable of rapid expansion when the need arose.

BIOGRAPHIES

THE ROYAL GENERALS: KAISER WILHELM II (1859–1941)

Born in Berlin on 27 January 1859, the son of the future King Friedrich III of Prussia and of Victoria, daughter of the British Queen Victoria, he was considered one of the brightest and best educated European

A painting of Hindenburg and Ludendorff planning the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes in 1915. Hindenburg is shown wearing the *Paletot* over a regimental *Litewka;* the latter has plain yellow collar patches and shows yellow lining where the corner of the lapel is turned up – the facing colour of the 3rd Foot Guards, to which Hindenburg was commissioned *à la suite*.

During an imperial visit to Bremen a striking dockworker threw a piece of metal at the Kaiser, hitting him close to his right eye; the wound left a deep scar, which was retouched out of most official photographs and omitted from paintings. After the incident Wilhelm commented that he was more accustomed to the roses that women threw at him during his visits. (Author's collection)

monarchs of his day. Although he was quite capable of charm he was also renowned for his bombastic, vain and insensitive manner, which sometimes aggravated Germany's foreign relations – more than once Berlin had to apologise for the Kaiser's speeches. His character stood for that of the Second Reich: strong but out of balance, intelligent but narrow, self-centred yet seeking acceptance.

Wilhelm's childhood was marked by a birth defect that rendered his left arm withered and useless, but he overcame this handicap to become a fine horseman and keen game shot. His upbringing was strict; he attended the Kassel Gymnasium, and then studied at the University of Bonn. The great Chancellor Bismarck tried to mould him into a conservative ruler in opposition to the liberal ideas of his father, and succeeded too well. In 1888 Friedrich III died after a reign of only three months; and two years later the young emperor dismissed Bismarck, the most important check on his short-sighted ambitions.

Wilhelm's education had turned him into an overtly militaristic ruler. He was both admiring and resentful of his British grandmother's nation and empire; he supported Germany's belated acquisition of overseas colonies and, under the influence of the anglophobic Adm von Tirpitz, Wilhelm pursued a costly programme to develop his Navy to rival Britain's. His support for the South African Boers during the 1899–1902 Boer War cost Germany its friendly relationship with Britain, despite several later attempts at reconciliation. After a nervous breakdown in 1908, Wilhelm retired more into the background of politics.

When Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated by a Serbian conspirator on 28 June 1914, the Kaiser and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg incited Austria-Hungary to exact revenge against Serbia. From then on, events quickly spiralled into what would become the Great War. Though nominally commander-in-chief of the German armed forces, the Kaiser soon lost any influence over military affairs. He toasted in pink champagne every reported success by his forces, which OHL propaganda inflated into decisive victories; but he was as quick to fall into depression at news of reverses. Jealous of Hindenburg's rising popularity and detesting Ludendorff's arrogant and tactless manner towards him, he supported Falkenhayn as long as possible. When Hindenburg and Ludendorff took over the helm in late 1916 the Kaiser quickly lost the last shreds of his influence over events. Unable to resist the pressure for unrestricted submarine warfare, he lent his name to this disastrous policy.

Famine and the enormous losses at the front soon cost him his public popularity, and he ceased to be a serious figure. He clung to the dignity of his throne, but by late 1918 even his generals regarded

him as negligible, important only for the respect due to his symbolic function. As revolution spread throughout Germany, Wilhelm was forced to abdicate as emperor and king on 9 and 28 November 1918 respectively.

Living in exile at Doorn in Holland, surrounded by his precious souvenirs and his panoply of some 300 uniforms, the white-bearded former emperor still received royalist delegations from Germany and former members of his imperial entourage. The Empress Augusta Viktoria died in 1921; one year later Wilhelm remarried, the 35-year-old widow Hermine Princess of Reuss. When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Wilhelm hoped for a restoration of the monarchy; when his hopes were disappointed, and he became dimly aware of the true nature of the Nazis, he kept a low profile for the rest of his life. He died on 5 June 1941; his will instructed that no delegation from the regime should attend his funeral, but the Nazis still gave him lavish military honours (oddly, although a propaganda film was made of the funeral, it was never shown in Germany or the occupied countries). Among the mourners were the former crown prince and Field-Marshal von Mackensen, both in their Hussar uniforms.

KRONPRINZ WILHELM von Preussen (1882–1951), General der Infanterie

Born on 6 May 1882 at Potsdam, the Crown Prince Wilhelm was the eldest son among Kaiser Wilhelm's six children. After an excellent education at court, at the age of 18 he received officer's training at Potsdam. Appointed to the OHL, the crown prince was also commissioned *à la suite* in the 1st Foot Guard Regiment, 1st Grenadier Regiment, 2nd Cuirassier Regiment, 1st Life Hussar Regiment, 1st Naval Battalion and 2nd Württemberg Infantry Regiment.

At the beginning of the war, in the German tradition of royal army command, Wilhelm (nicknamed 'Little Willie' by the British) was given command of the 5th Army, named in his honour 'Kronprinz Wilhelm'. Although living in the shadow of his father, he hoped for an early peace; but that did not prevent him from following the policy of Falkenhayn in the bloody battles at Verdun, where he found himself labelled 'the butcher'. Honorary titles and distinctions came his way, including, on 22 August 1915, the Order of the Pour le Mérite. On 6 May 1916 he became colonel-in-chief of the 6th Jäger Bataillon, and some three months later of the 19th Hussar Regiment; he was awarded the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite on 8 September of the same year.[5]

In 1917 he took command of an army group, Heeresgruppe Deutscher Kronprinz. Although militaristic in manner, by 1917 he was in favour of peace talks to bring what he regarded as a senseless war to an end; but his hopes soon fell victim to the intrigues of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, which forced the resignation of Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg. On 24 March 1918 he became colonel-in-chief of the 1st Grenadier Regiment. His armies won a significant victory on the Aisne during the spring offensives of 1918, but he soon realised that defeat was likely to follow; he recommended a policy of retreat to Hindenburg and Ludendorff, but was firmly rebuffed.

5 'Colonel-in-chief' is the nearest British translation of the German appointment of regimental or battalion *Chef* – or in Bavarian and Hessian service, *Inhaber*.

Following his father into exile, the former crown prince returned to Germany in 1923. His entry into politics brought him into contact with Hitler in the hope that the National Socialists would restore the monarchy, but his father forbade him to link himself to the Nazis. He retired into private life, spending the rest of his years as a renowned dandy at the Hohenzollern castle at Hechingen-Württemberg. Wilhelm died in his nearby villa on 20 July 1951.

Crown Prince Wilhelm with his uncle Heinrich (1862–1929), who was a grand admiral and naval commander in the Baltic Sea. The crown prince wears the general officer's double-breasted *Paletot* greatcoat, and the peaked service cap of the 1st Life Hussars, showing a death's-head badge between the national and state cockades (see Plate F2). So-called commissions *'à la suite'* in German regiments were awarded to senior commanders as a compliment; these were honorary appointments involving no regimental duties but entitling them to wear a special general officer's version of the prestigious regimental uniform. (Collection of the Royal Army Museum, Brussels, Belgium)

KRONPRINZ RUPPRECHT von Bayern (1869–1955), Generalfeldmarschall

Born in Munich on 18 May 1869, Rupprecht was the son of the future and last King of Bavaria, Ludwig III. He was a descendant of the 17th century Prince Rupert of the Rhine who had fought for King Charles I in the English Civil War, and his sister-in-law was the Queen of Belgium.

Rupprecht attended grammar school and later studied law and other subjects at the universities of Munich and Berlin. Commissioned in the infantry in 1896, he later attended the Bavarian War Academy and thereafter rose swiftly through the ranks. By 1906 he had become a general and commander of I Bavarian Corps. Seven years later he was promoted to colonel-general and placed in charge of the 4th Army Inspection. He received such honorary appointments as colonel-in-chief of the 2nd Bavarian Infantry Regiment, and commissions *à la suite* in the Bavarian Life Guards Infantry Regiment, 1st Cuirassier Regiment, 2nd Württemberg Field Artillery Regiment 'Prinz-Regent Luitpold von Bayern', Saxon 3rd Infantry Regiment 'König Ludwig III von Bayern', and 3rd Naval Battalion.

When the war began Rupprecht was given command of the 6th Army, deploying in Alsace-Lorraine; this initially comprised three Bavarian and one Prussian corps plus one Bavarian reserve corps. With that force he was expected to draw a major portion of the French armies into German territory, in preparation for an eventual counterblow by his own as well as the neighbouring 5th and 7th Armies. His royal blood revolted against this defensive role, however: as Crown Prince of Bavaria he claimed the right to participate in the victorious advance against the Allies, and after retreating for a few days Rupprecht decided that his troops should take part in the offensive. He obtained Moltke's agreement to a change of plan, and in a series of costly attacks his troops pushed into French Lorraine, capturing 12,000 prisoners and

One of the most capable royal officers of the war was the Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht; these portraits do justice to this tall, upright, handsome and self-disciplined man. In the 'outdoor' portrait he wears the field-grey uniform of a Bavarian general, this rank indicated by the silver-embroidered collar patches; see also Plates H1 & 3. The studio portrait shows him in the uniform of the 2nd Württemberg Field Artillery Regiment 'Prinz-Regent Luitpold von Bayern' to which he was commissioned *à la suite*; note the Swedish cuffs and the artillery's ball finial on the helmet. (Author's collection)

some 50 guns. What was announced as a complete victory soon got bogged down before the French fortifications between Nancy and Epinal, with heavy losses.

After the battle of the Marne the OHL ordered the transfer of Rupprecht's 6th Army to the northern section of the front, and in October most of his divisions were deployed in Artois and southern Flanders. Together with the 4th Army on its right, his force then tried to re-animate the offensive in what became known as 'the race to the sea', but these efforts bogged down in the Flanders mud. From then until his appointment as commander of Heeresgruppe Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern on 28 August 1916, he presided over the mainly defensive operations of the 6th Army from headquarters at Lille and later Douai. On 22 August 1915 he was awarded the Pour le Mérite.

Promoted field-marshal on 1 August 1916, Rupprecht passed command of the 6th Army to ColGen Ludwig, Baron von Falkenhausen towards the end of September and assumed control of his newly formed army group with headquarters at Cambrai. On 20 December 1916 he was awarded the Oakleaves to the Pour le Mérite. Initially his Heeresgruppe included the 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th Armies; in March 1917 the latter was withdrawn and replaced by the 4th Army. Rupprecht was henceforth responsible for the entire northern front facing the BEF from the Belgian coast to the Oise River. After a number of desperate defensive battles, in March 1918 his command resumed offensive operations on a large scale, advancing as far as the Arras–Albert line. In April his 4th and 6th Armies launched an equally successful offensive further

to the north, but the hoped-for collapse of the Allies did not materialise. By July the Germans were pushed onto the defensive, and for the next four months Rupprecht supervised the gradual retreat of his army group. In this work, as indeed in all of his endeavours since November 1915, he was ably assisted by his long-time chief of staff, LtGen Hermann von Kuhl (a Rhineland schoolmaster's son and, like Rupprecht, a staunch Roman Catholic).

Three days after his father King Ludwig III abdicated on 8 November 1918, Rupprecht gave up his command and retired to his estates. The father of four children from his first marriage, he remarried in 1921 and had six more. Although he welcomed the later revival of monarchist feelings in Bavaria, he refused to be drawn into wild schemes for the restoration of his dynasty. During World War II he and his family lived mostly in Italy. He returned to Bavaria in 1945, and died at Leutstetten on 2 August 1955.

Field–Marshal Prince Leopold of Bavaria, commander-in-chief of the united forces on the Eastern Front. His very able chief of staff, MajGen Max Hoffmann, wrote that the 69-year-old prince was likeable, relatively harmless, but rather unintelligent. He wears the uniform of the 1st Bavarian Heavy Cavalry Regiment (see Plate C3). The officer's pale blue *Überrock* has a poppy-red stand collar, and piping down the front, around the cuffs and pocket flaps in the rear skirts. The two rows of seven gilt buttons also distinguish it from the Prussian style. The prince wears the Bavarian officer's undress waist belt in silver brocade with two pale blue stripes, and carries the field-marshal's undress baton and a heavy cavalry sabre. (Author's collection)

PRINZ LEOPOLD von Bayern (1846–1930), Generalfeldmarschall

Leopold von Wittelsbach, a Prince of Bavaria and son-in-law of Kaiser Franz Josef of Austria, was born in Munich on 9 February 1846. He served as an officer in the Bavarian Army, and thus against Prussia during the 1866 Seven Weeks' War. King Ludwig II of Bavaria sent him to the battlefields of France in 1870, when he was present at the Prussian victory of Sedan. Remaining in the Imperial Army, he was promoted to field-marshal in 1905, retiring in 1912.

Aged 69 years, he was recalled to active service on 16 April 1915 and given command of the 9th Army on the Eastern Front, where his troops were engaged in several fierce battles around Lodz and Warsaw during autumn 1915. Placed at the head of a combined Austro-German force that would form Heeresgruppe Prinz Leopold von Bayern on 5 August 1915, he continued to serve in the East; three days later he was awarded the Pour le Mérite. When Hindenburg succeeded Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff, Prince Leopold became commander-in-chief on the Eastern Front on 29 August 1916. During the peace talks with the Russians at Brest-Litovsk his chief of staff, Gen Max Hoffmann, dominated the negotiations. While Hoffmann played the 'Ludendorff' of the Eastern Front, Leopold increasingly retired from active duty. Already honoured with regimental appointments such as colonel-in-chief of the 52nd Infantry Regiment and 7th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, he received on 25 July 1917 the Oakleaves to the Pour le Mérite. Retaining his nominal post as commander-in-chief of the Eastern Front until the end of the war, Leopold retired after the Armistice, and died at Munich on 28 September 1930.

Duke Albrecht of Württemberg, a field-marshal of the German Empire, is shown here displaying the Pour le Mérite that he received on 27 August 1915. Above the Iron Cross 1st Class on his chest he wears the Star of the Württemberg *Militär-Verdienstordens* (Military Order of Merit). Duke Albrecht was given command of the newly re-organised 4th Army that was to fight its way to the Channel ports in autumn 1914. Its battles around Ypres would be remembered for one of the cruellest slaughters of the war: thousands of patriotic young university student volunteers advanced with élan, only to be mown down by the musketry of the British regulars. (Author's collection)

HERZOG ALBRECHT von Württemberg (1865–1939), Generalfeldmarschall

Born on 23 December 1865 in Vienna, Duke Albrecht was the son of a Württemberg prince and a Habsburg archduchess. He entered the Army in 1883, rising rapidly in its hierarchy, and becoming heir to the Württemberg throne. Promoted colonel-general, he received the 6th Army Inspectorate at Stuttgart, and subsequently colonelcy-in-chief of the 119th Grenadier Regiment and honorary *à la suite* commissions in the 5th Cuirassier Regiment, 19th Lancer Regiment and 2nd Naval Battalion.

At the start of the war Duke Albrecht became commander of the 4th Army, initially composed of five Prussian corps. Fighting their way through the Ardennes and crossing the Meuse, his troops entered Champagne. After the battle of the Marne he was assigned to Flanders, to command a new 4th Army consisting of one experienced and four newly raised reserve corps. In October–November 1914 these inexperienced troops charged in close ranks and suffered heavy losses during the battles of First Ypres against Belgian, British and French troops. Bogged down in mud during the winter, Albrecht's forces witnessed the first chlorine gas attacks against Allied troops at Second Ypres in April 1915. Awarded the Pour le Mérite on 27 August 1915, he was promoted field-marshal in August 1916, receiving his baton from Hindenburg at Crown Prince Rupprecht's headquarters.

Albrecht remained nominally in charge of the Flanders sector until 24 February 1917; he was then sent to Strasbourg to command the Heeresgruppe Herzog Albrecht holding the southern portions of the Western Front. His army group successfully defended Alsace-Lorraine until the end of the war. On 25 February 1918 he was awarded Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite. As a Roman Catholic he was considered a suitable regent for the new Polish kingdom that the Germans wanted to create in 1917, but Albrecht declined the offer. He retired in 1921 to his castle at Altshausen, Upper Swabia, where he died on 29 October 1939.

THE PROFESSIONAL GENERALS:
Fritz von BELOW (1853–1918), General der Infanterie

The son of a Prussian general, Fritz Wilhelm Theodor Karl von Below was born at Danzig on 23 September 1853. Commissioned in 1873, he entered the Prussian Kriegsakademie. His pre-war career included both staff posts and unit commands, and in October 1912 he was given command of the newly formed XXI Corps at Saarbrücken. He led his corps during the first eight months of the war, and was present at the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes, for which he received the Pour le Mérite on 14 March 1915.

Below was chosen to replace Field-Marshal Karl von Bülow as commander of the 2nd Army on 4 April 1915. Serving in the Somme

King Friedrich August III of Saxony (far right) visits Duke Albrecht of Württemberg (third from right) in the Ardennes; a date after 29 December 1916 is indicated by the king's wearing the Pour le Mérite that he received on that date. At first both these federal states of the German Empire followed Prussia into the war with the same conviction; but by 1916–17 and the dominance of the Hindenburg/ Ludendorff partnership, they started questioning the purpose of fighting on. (Author's collection)

region, his three divisions held a front of over 50 miles, and were badly mauled during the opening day of the great Anglo-French offensive on 1 July 1916. On 19 July, Below and his chief of staff, Col Friedrich von Lossberg, were reassigned to the newly created headquarters of 1st Army, responsible for the northern Somme sector; and on 11 August he received the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite. In April 1917 the 1st Army was directed to the Reims area, where it helped to repel the ill-fated Nivelle offensive. On 17 June 1917 Below was commissioned *à la suite* into the 3rd Grenadier Guard Regiment. He remained in charge of the Reims sector for the next 14 months, transferring from command of the 1st Army to the 9th Army on 18 June 1918.

Suffering from pneumonia and other health problems, Below went on leave in the same month and was placed on the stand-by list on 7 August, supervising the preparation of a new infantry manual. He died at Weimar on 23 November 1918.

Otto von BELOW (1857–1944), General der Infanterie

The younger brother of Fritz von Below, Otto Ernst Vinzent Leo von Below was born on 18 January 1857 at Danzig. Joining the Prussian Army in 1875, he attended the Kriegsakademie from 1884 until 1887. Between 1905 and 1909 he served as commander of the 19th Infantry Regiment. After being promoted major-general and commander of the 43rd Infantry Brigade in 1909, he was made a divisional commander in East Prussia in April 1912. At the start of the war Below, now a full general, took over I Reserve Corps, which he led with distinction through the opening campaigns in East Prussia, at Gumbinnen, Tannenberg and the First Battle of the Masurian Lakes. This earned him the command of the 8th Army on 7 November 1914 in succession to Gen Hermann von Francois. Below played a major role in the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes, and received the Pour le Mérite on 16 February 1915. His command was changed on 26 May 1915 to that of the Niemen Army, with which he took

Courland in 1915. Back with the 8th Army, he stayed in Courland until 1916, when he was sent to Macedonia to take charge of the German and Bulgarian divisions deployed in the Heeresgruppe Below. Six months later he was transferred to France as commander of the 6th Army.

It would be a brief tenure, since on 9 September 1917 he was again transferred, now to the Italian Front, where he became commander-in-chief of the newly formed Austro-German 14th Army. The following month Below launched the highly successful offensive at Caporetto (Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo), virtually destroying the Italian armies on this front. Widely regarded as one of Germany's best field commanders, he was named colonel-in-chief of the 9th Jäger Battalion on 18 November 1916; in 1917 he was decorated with the Order of the Black Eagle and, on 27 March, with the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite.

On 1 February 1918, Below returned to France as commander of the new 17th Army in the Arras-Cambrai sector. Participating in the German spring offensive and in the summer defensive battles against the Allies, Below switched commands in the last weeks of the war with the commander of the 1st Army, Gen Bruno von Murda. After the Armistice, Below was sent to Kassel where he took command of the western home front, avoiding a revolutionary coup. From January to June 1919 he would hold his last command, XVII Corps at Danzig. He was dismissed in late June 1919 after threatening that he would lead an uprising against Germany's acceptance of the Versailles treaty. He died at Besenhausen, near Göttingen, on 9 March 1944.

General der Infanterie Otto von Below started the war as commander of I Reserve Corps on the Eastern Front. His 14th Army fought in Italy in autumn 1917; employing the infiltration tactics of the Sturmtruppen, they spearheaded the German-Austrian offensive that gained the crushing victory of Caporetto. In March 1918 his 17th Army repeated the success during the first stages of Gen Ludendorff's spring offensive. He is seen here wearing the plain *Überrock*, before the award of the Pour le Mérite in February 1915 for his part in the victory at Second Masurian Lakes as commander of the 8th Army. (Author's collection)

Karl von BÜLOW (1846–1921), Generalfeldmarschall

The son of a Prussian officer, Bülow was born in Berlin on 24 March 1846. Participating in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, he never attended the Kriegsakademie, but was posted to the General Staff in 1876. He was promoted captain the following year, and colonel of the 4th Foot Guard Regiment in 1894. In 1903 he commanded III Corps; in 1912 he was promoted colonel-general and appointed head of the 3rd Army Inspection. He was honoured with the colonelcy-in-chief of the 12th Grenadier Regiment, and a commission *à la suite* in his old regiment, the 4th Foot Guards.

Mobilisation brought Bülow command of the 2nd Army, which was to sweep through Belgium into France in the centre of the German 'right hook'; his command would also briefly include both the 1st and 3rd Armies on his flanks. Although a coldly arrogant and self-confident personality, at the age of 68 years Bülow was not in good health at the outbreak of war, and soon revealed himself as tired and indecisive. The transferring away to the East of his brilliant senior staff officer, Erich Ludendorff, would soon be felt during Bülow's operations in the second

(continued on page 41)

1: Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen
2: Kaiser Wilhelm II
3: Grossherzog Wilhelm Ernst
von Saxe-Weimar

1

2

3

1: General Alexander von Kluck
2: Generaloberst Josias von Heeringen
3: General's collar insignia
4: General's cuff insignia
5: General Graf von Zeppelin

P. Couperie

1: Generaloberst Graf von Moltke
2: Generaloberst Moritz, Freiherr von Bissing
3: Generalfeldmarschall Prinz Leopold von Bayern

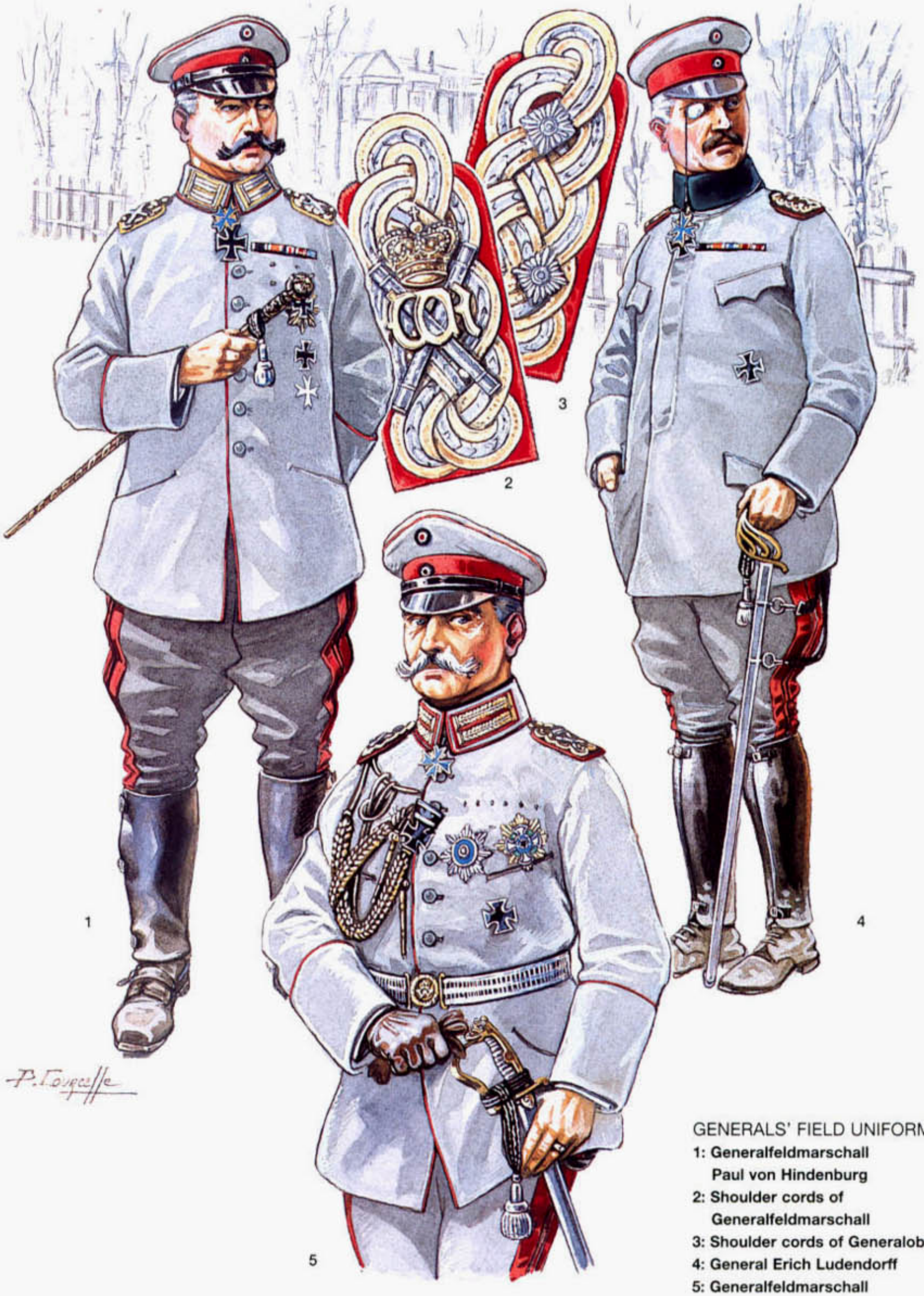
C

THE IMPERIAL NAVY

1: Vizeadmiral Graf von Spee

2: Grossadmiral Graf von Tirpitz

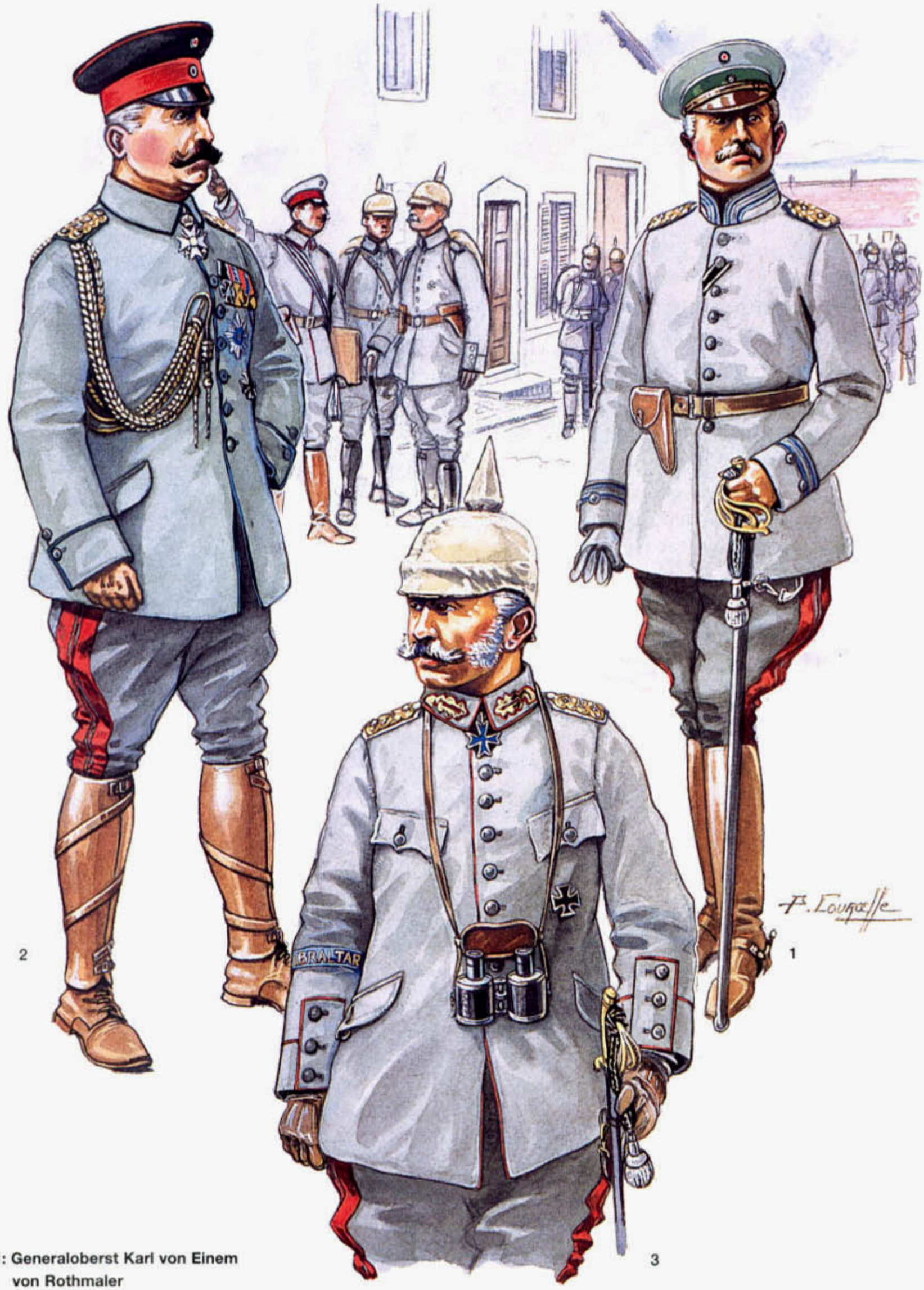
3: Kaiser Wilhelm II in naval uniform



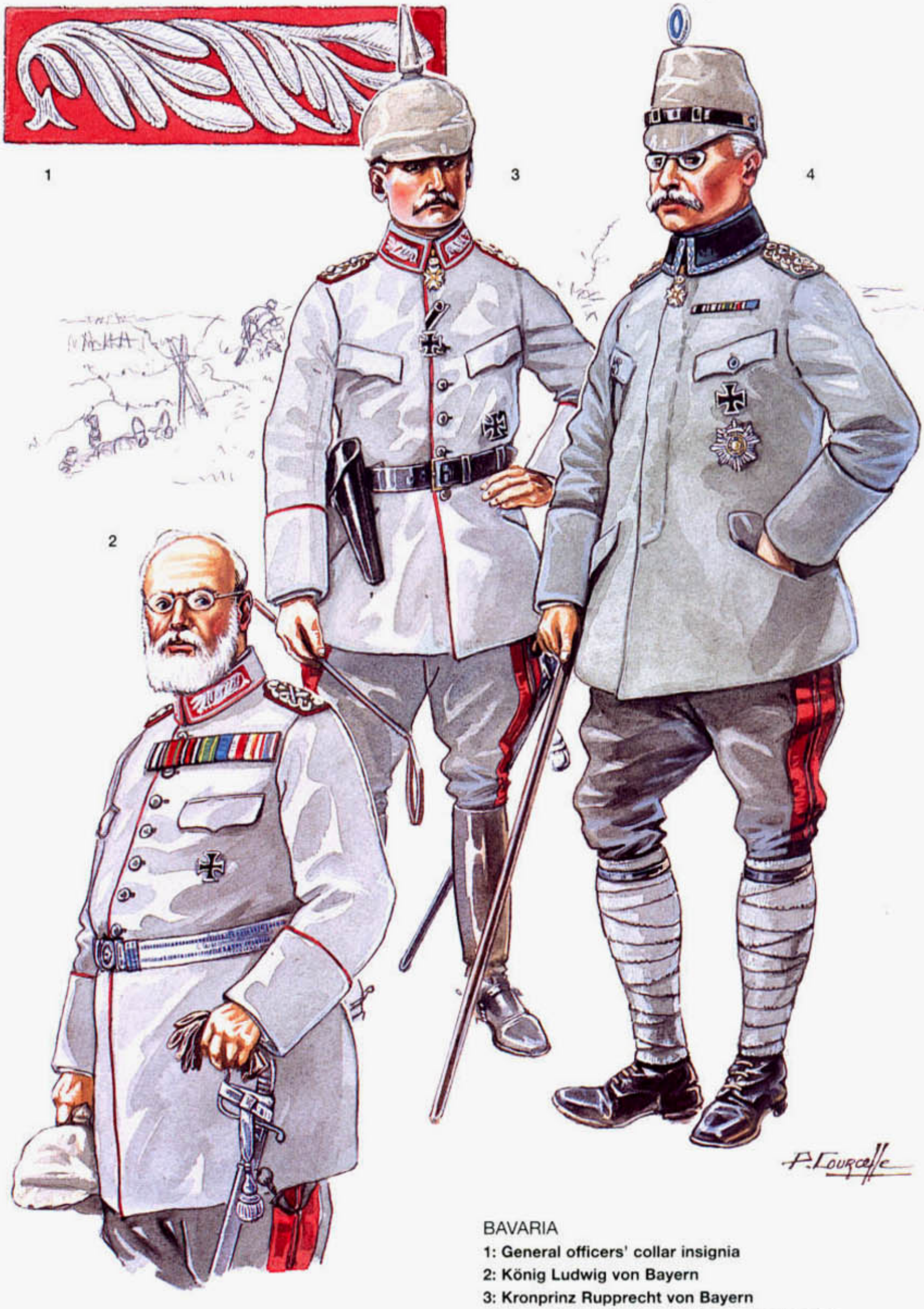
GENERALS' FIELD UNIFORMS

1: Generalfeldmarschall Paul von Hindenburg
2: Shoulder cords of Generalfeldmarschall
3: Shoulder cords of Generaloberst
4: General Erich Ludendorff
5: Generalfeldmarschall August von Mackensen

1: General officer wearing *Litewka* and *Paletot*
2: Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen
3: Kaiser Wilhelm II in field uniform



1: Generaloberst Karl von Einem von Rothmaler
2: Generaloberst Max, Freiherr von Hausen
3: General der Infanterie Otto von Emmich



BAVARIA

1: General officers' collar insignia

2: König Ludwig von Bayern

3: Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern

4: General der Infanterie Ritter von Fasbender

Field-Marshal Karl von Bülow, commander of the 2nd Army during the crisis of the Schlieffen Plan in late August 1914, is seen here in the uniform of the 4.Garde-Regiment zu Fuss to which he was commissioned *à la suite*. The collar bears gold *Litzen*, and the pads of the full dress epaulettes are in the pale blue facing colour of that regiment. (Author's collection)

half of August. After taking Liège and Namur and sweeping across north-east France, on 29 August Bülow was attacked in his right flank at St Quentin by Gen Lanrezac's French 5th Army, and summoned Gen von Kluck's 1st Army to swing south on his right to support him. Both armies crossed the Marne, and were attacked anew on 6 September. Although this desperate gamble in front of Paris by Gens Joffre and Gallieni was faltering by 9 September, a gap of some 30 miles had developed between Bülow's and Kluck's armies, and was being exploited by French and British forces. Bülow became increasingly concerned about this, and two days later he agreed with LtCol Richard Hentsch, an OHL emissary sent by Moltke, that a withdrawal was a necessary precaution. The next day Bülow ordered the 2nd Army to retreat, thus forcing the 1st and 3rd Armies on his flanks to follow suit. This marked the final abandonment of the Schlieffen Plan.

Bülow was nevertheless promoted to field-marshal in January 1915, but a heart attack forced him to take sick leave. On the day he left his command, 4 April 1915, he received the Pour le Mérite. Although he was eager to return to active service Bülow was never recalled, and retired from the Army in 1916. He died in Berlin on 31 August 1921.

Emil von EICHHORN (1848–1918), Generalfeldmarschall

The son of an aristocratic Prussian senior civil servant, Emil Gottfried Hermann von Eichhorn was born on 13 February 1848 at Breslau. He joined the Prussian Foot Guards in 1866, serving in the Austro-Prussian war of that year and the Franco-Prussian War. After attending the Kriegsakademie he was attached to the General Staff in 1883. From 1904 he commanded XVIII Corps at Frankfurt am Main, and a year later he was promoted general of infantry. In 1912 he was appointed head of the 7th Army Inspection at Saarbrücken; this brought promotion to colonel-general, and an honorary commission in the 8th Grenadier Regiment. During the 1914 mobilisation Eichhorn was entrusted with command of the 5th Army, but injuries from a riding accident kept him from active service for six months.

On 26 January 1915 he was given command of the newly formed 10th Army in East Prussia. Present in February 1915 during Hindenburg's Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes, he took Kovno in August, for which he was rewarded with the Pour le Mérite on the 18th of that month; his capture of Vilna in September brought him the Oakleaves. Eichhorn's command was then extensively reinforced, so that in August 1916 it was renamed Heeresgruppe Eichhorn, containing all German troops in Lithuania and Courland. In 1917 his army group took Riga and the Baltic Isles, followed by the occupation of what became Latvia and Estonia.

Eichhorn was promoted field-marshal on 18 December 1917; and after the Peace of Brest-Litovsk he became military governor of the Ukraine,

south Russia and the Crimea, occupied by his renamed Heeresgruppe Kiev. Assisted by his chief of staff, LtGen Wilhelm Groener, Eichhorn tried to stabilise the chaotic situation in this vast region and to exploit its resources for starving Germany's benefit. The regime he installed was oppressive, and on 30 July 1918 he was assassinated by a revolutionary socialist in a bomb attack. Eichhorn's body was brought to Berlin where it was buried at the Invaliedenfriedhof.

Field-Marshal Emil von Eichhorn had the bad luck to be the only German general killed during the war. As commander of the occupation forces in the former Tsarist territories after the collapse of Russia and the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, he was killed in a bomb attack planned by revolutionary socialists. Eichhorn poses here in regimental full dress as an officer *à la suite* to the 8th Grenadier Regiment. (Author's collection)

Karl EINEM VON ROTHMALER (1853–1934), Generaloberst

Born at Herzberg (Harz) on 1 January 1853, Karl Wilhelm Georg August Gottfried Einem von Rothmaler entered the Prussian Army as a cadet, and served as a cavalry officer during the Franco-Prussian War. He was admitted in 1880 to the General Staff Corps without the usual training at the Kriegsakademie. From 1898 onwards he served in the Prussian Ministry of War, becoming a major-general in 1900. In August 1903 the Kaiser appointed him Minister of War in the Prussian Cabinet. In this function he worked closely with the Chief of the General Staff, Gen von Schlieffen, in the introduction of machine guns, heavy artillery and better fortifications, and also planned the introduction of *feldgrau* uniforms. Promoted general of cavalry, he left the ministry in 1909 to take command of VII Corps at Münster.

In August 1914, Einem von Rothmaler led his corps into Belgium and France as part of Bülow's 2nd Army. On 12 September he replaced

ColGen Max, Baron von Hausen as commander of the 3rd Army. Promoted to colonel-general in January 1915, he kept this command until the end of the war. Assisted by capable staff officers, he successfully held the Champagne sector of the Western Front against a succession of French attacks, receiving the Pour le Mérite on 16 March 1915 and its Oakleaves on 17 October 1916. In autumn 1918 he brought his troops back to the Maas–Antwerp defensive line but, under constant pressure from Allied forces, he retreated behind the Maas river. The day before the Armistice, Gen Einem von Rothmaler was given command of the German crown prince's army group, and brought it back to the right bank of the Rhine. Already commissioned *à la suite* in the 4th Cuirassier Regiment, he received the colonelcy-in-chief of the 16th Infantry Regiment on 8 November 1918. He retired in January 1919, and in later years would write his memoirs and a book on the former Prussian Army. He died on 7 April 1934 at Mülheim in the Ruhr.

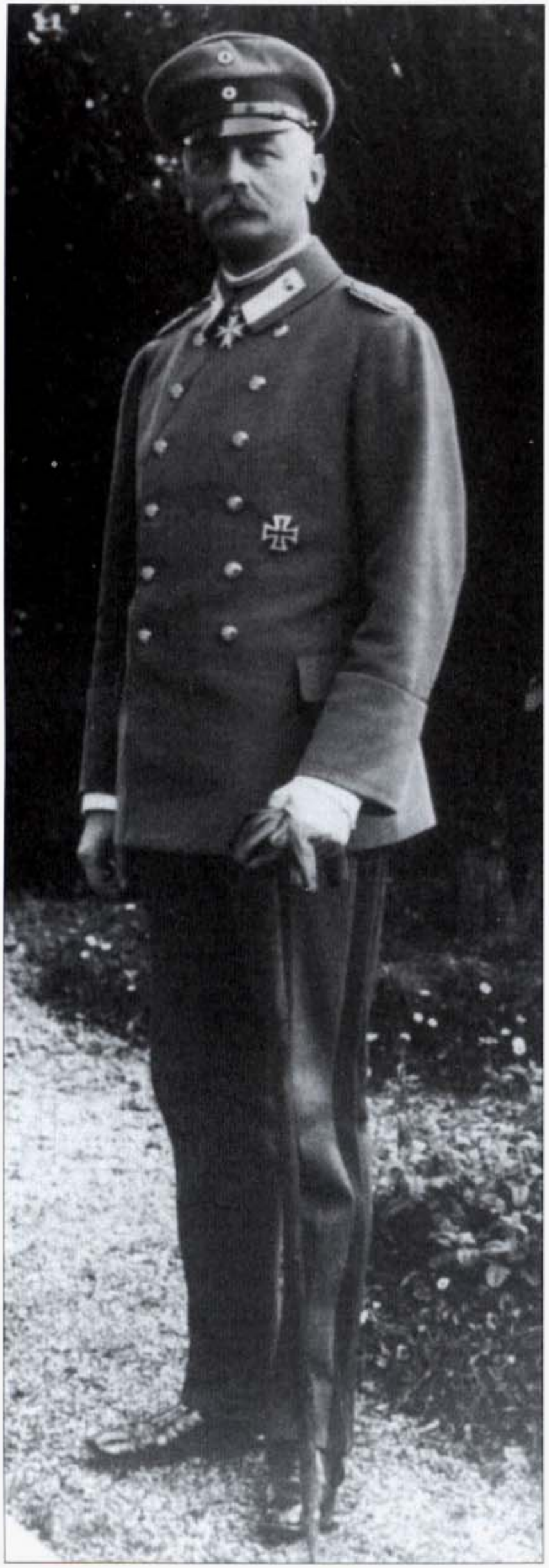
OPPOSITE AND ABOVE
Colonel-General Karl Einem, the former Minister of War who cleared the way for the introduction of the *feldgrau* uniform. In the studio portrait he poses in the white full dress uniform of his *à la suite* commission to the 4th Cuirassier Regiment; his epaulettes bear the three stars of his rank, and the regimental helmet shows the general's white-over-black feather plumes. See Plate G1 for the field-grey uniform in the other photograph. (Author's collection)

Erich von FALKENHAYN (1861–1922), General der Infanterie

Born at Graudenz on 11 November 1861, he joined the Army at an early age. In 1899 he was sent as a military instructor to the German force in China; he served there until 1903, seeing action as a staff officer during the Boxer Rebellion. Returning to Germany, he continued to serve in the General Staff Corps; his service in China, and his fine reports on the subject, earned the favour of the Kaiser, and in 1913 he was appointed Prussian Minister of War. After the setback on the Marne he was chosen to replace Gen von Moltke as Chief of the General Staff on 14 September 1914. He was rewarded for his services with the Pour le Mérite on 16 February 1915, followed by the Order of the Black Eagle on 12 May, the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite on 3 June, and an *à la suite* commission in the 4th Foot Guard Regiment on 11 September 1915.

Falkenhayn's impoverished but aristocratic family background, his cautious nature and his good education earned him the full support of the Kaiser, but he was subject to the rivalry of the 'Easterners' Hindenburg and Ludendorff. While he succeeded in stabilising the Western Front, he was put under great pressure from the 'Easterners' to release resources to them to make up for Austro-Hungarian failures in early 1915. In April he sent eight divisions from the West to form the new 11th Army (Gen von Mackensen), which drove the Russians back at Gorlice-Tarnow in May; but more soon had to be sent to replace Austro-Hungarians withdrawn from Galicia in June after Italy entered the war. By the end of the year it was clear that no decisive strategic victory was yet possible in the East, and Falkenhayn concentrated on the West; here the failure of Allied attacks against his defensive systems in 1915 had convinced him that such attempts to achieve major break-throughs were pointless. Instead he embraced a policy of attrition, in the belief that in the face of massive and continuing casualties French willpower would fail.

Falkenhayn's reliance on the tactics of attrition, in an attempt to bleed France white at Verdun in 1916, was so complete that the horrific and apparently open-ended loss of German lives left him bankrupt of ideas. For the first time since the start of the war the Central Powers experienced



serious setbacks, at Verdun and on the Somme, in Russia and the Balkans, and in the fall of Gorizia to the Italians. Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the Austro-Hungarian Gen Conrad von Hötzendorff intrigued against Falkenhayn; and on the news of Romania's declaration of war on Austria-Hungary, the Kaiser dismissed his former protégé on 29 August 1916, replacing him as Chief of the General Staff with Hindenburg.

Falkenhayn accepted the subordinate command of the 9th Army on the Transylvanian front in September. He defeated the Romanians at the battle of the Red Tower Pass on 30 September, and advanced together with Mackensen's army towards Bucharest, entering the Romanian capital on 6 December 1916. With Romania defeated, Falkenhayn was sent to Palestine where he commanded the Turkish forces in early 1917, receiving the honorary colonelcy-in-chief of the 152nd Infantry Regiment on 11 July 1917. After a series of setbacks Falkenhayn was defeated by the British Gen Allenby at Gaza on 31 October 1917; Jerusalem fell in December, and Falkenhayn was replaced in command by Gen Liman von Sanders in February 1918. On 24 February, Falkenhayn took over command of the 10th Army, in which post he served until the end of the war. He retired after the Armistice, and died on 8 April 1922 near Potsdam.

Hermann von FRANCOIS (1856–1933), General der Infanterie

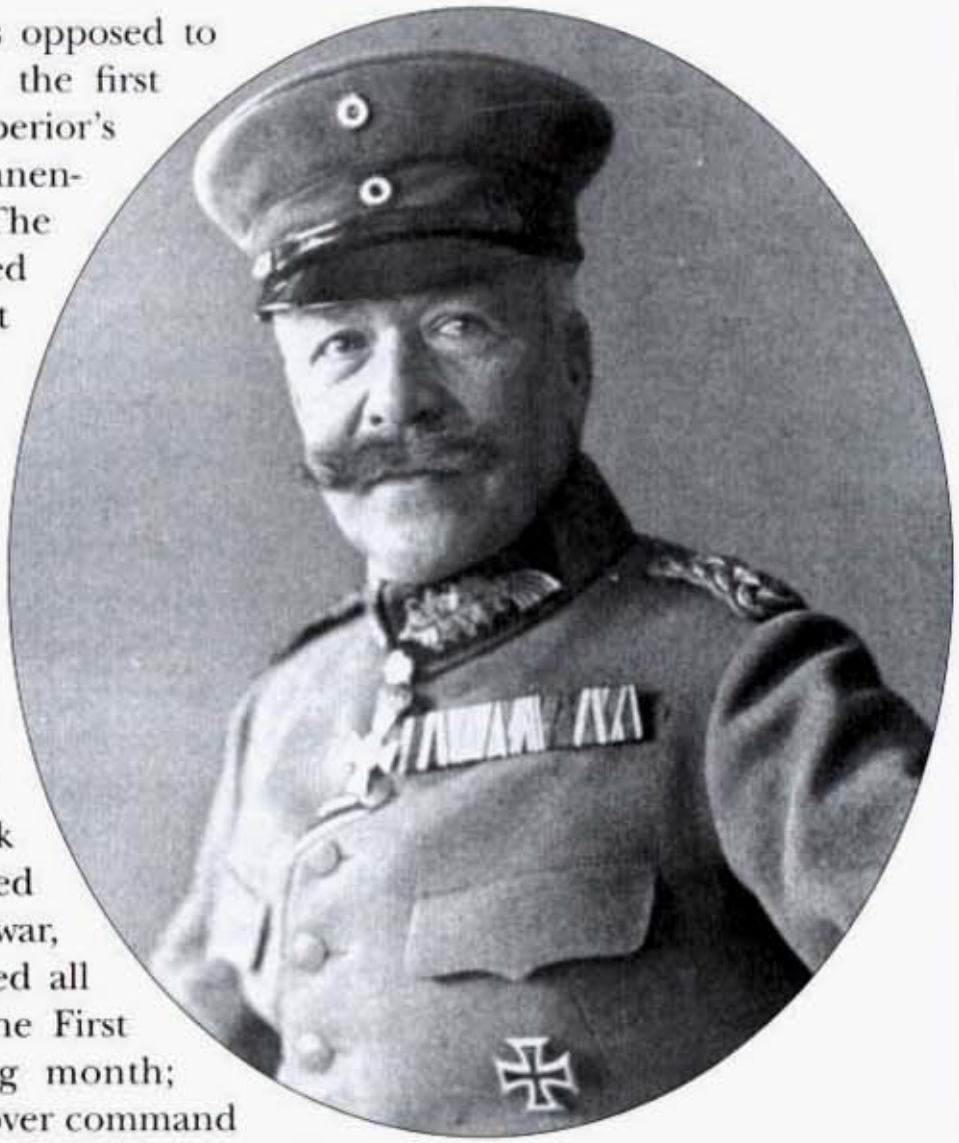
Francois was born on 31 January 1856 in Luxembourg, the son of a Prussian Army officer of French Huguenot descent who would be killed as a major-general during the Franco-Prussian War. Starting his career in the Foot Guards, he soon entered the Kriegsakademie, from which he graduated in 1887. After rising through a series of staff and command positions he was entrusted on 1 October 1913 with command of I Corps in Gen von Prittwitz's 8th Army, which he held at the outbreak of war.

The Schlieffen Plan foresaw a controlled retreat into East Prussia in the face of a Russian offensive,

General Erich von Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff, wearing the undress double-breasted *Litewka* working tunic. Note the solid colour, single-button collar patches worn on this garment by all ranks; Falkenhayn's *à la suite* commission was – like Karl von Bülow's – to the 4th Foot Guards, so these are pale blue. The staff officer Col Max Bauer considered that Falkenhayn would have made a better politician or minister than a chief of staff. (Collection Alfred & Roland Umhey)

but the headstrong and stubborn Francois was opposed to this doctrine, and he played a major role in the first encounters with the Russians. Ignoring his superior's orders, Francois successfully attacked Gen Rennenkampf's 1st Russian Army at Stalluponen. The positive result of the engagement encouraged Prittwitz to attack the same Russian troops at Gumbinnen; but when this failed to push the enemy out of East Prussia, Prittwitz panicked and ordered a general retreat. Afraid of losing the homeland of the Junkers, Moltke sent reinforcements east, and replaced Prittwitz with the recalled Gen von Hindenburg, giving him the current hero of the hour, Ludendorff, as his chief of staff.

At the battle of Tannenberg in late August the wilful Francois again disobeyed his superiors' orders, not only driving in Samsonov's left flank but penetrating right around his rear; this resulted in perhaps the greatest German victory of the war, for which Hindenburg and Ludendorff received all the credit. Francois was equally effective at the First Battle of the Masurian Lakes the following month; promoted a general of infantry, he briefly took over command of the 8th Army from 8 October to 6 November 1914. However, his insubordinate character had earned him a reputation for unreliability, and he found himself 'promoted' commander of the newly formed XXXXI Reserve Corps on 24 December 1914. After brief service in the West he returned to the Russian Front in April 1915, and received the Pour le Mérite on 14 May for his part in the victory of Gorlice-Tarnow earlier that month.



The headstrong General Hermann von Francois, whose decision to disobey the orders of his superiors saved the situation in East Prussia in August 1914. Note this German style of wearing ribbon bars. (Anne S.K.Brown Collection, Providence, USA)

On 28 June 1915, Francois took over command of the Westphalian VII Corps in France, a post that he filled until July 1918. From July 1916 onwards he also became responsible for Meuse Group West, supervising German operations in the left bank sector of the Verdun region. Distrusted by Ludendorff, he was never again promoted or entrusted with serious commands; nevertheless he received the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite on 22 July 1917 for his conduct on the Verdun front. Francois gave up his command on 6 July 1918, and on the same day was commissioned *à la suite* in the 3rd Grenadier Guard Regiment. He stayed on the stand-by list until October and was then pensioned off. He died from a kidney disease in Berlin on 15 May 1933.

Max von GALLWITZ (1852–1937), General der Artillerie

Although he was of lower middle-class origin and a devout Roman Catholic, Gallwitz became a major figure in Imperial Germany. Born at Breslau on 2 May 1852, he enlisted in the Prussian Army during the Franco-Prussian War, and was commissioned in the field artillery two years later. After attending the Kriegsakademie he held positions both in the General Staff Corps and the Prussian War Ministry; he commanded a division at Cologne, and in 1911 became Inspector of

Field Artillery. Raised to noble status in 1913, Gallwitz was given command of the Guard Reserve Corps at the outbreak of hostilities, and took part in the siege of Namur.

After participating in the invasion of Belgium, the corps was sent to East Prussia to join the 8th Army in late August. In November 1914 the Garde-Reservekorps was split up, and Gallwitz assumed command of a mixed German/Austro-Hungarian corps in Poland. Three months later, on 9 February 1915, he was entrusted with the defence of East and West Prussia as head of Heeresgruppe Gallwitz. He was rewarded with the Pour le Mérite on 24 July 1915; and on 7 August his steadily reinforced command was retitled the 12th Army. More honours would come his way: a commission *à la suite* in the 76th Field Artillery Regiment on 27 November 1915, the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite on 28 September 1916, and the Order of the Black Eagle on 21 December 1917.

On 22 September 1915, Gallwitz participated in the conquest of Serbia as commander of the 11th Army. In March 1916 he was given a major role in the battle of Verdun as commander of Meuse Group West. When the battle of the Somme intensified he was sent north to take charge of the operations of the 2nd Army. On 17 December 1916, Gallwitz was sent back to the Verdun sector as commander of the 5th Army. On 1 January 1918 his authority was broadened by placing the adjacent Army Detachment C under his command, thus elevating him to the position of army group commander. In 1918 Gallwitz's divisions generally gave a good account of themselves in the defensive battles in the Meuse-Moselle region. It seems that Gallwitz was repeatedly guided by his religious convictions into opposing harsh measures ordered by his superiors.

Gallwitz was considered by many to be a suitable candidate for the chancellorship of the Weimar Republic. After his retirement he entered politics, and from 1920 to 1924 held a seat in the Reichstag as a deputy of the National People's Party. He died at Naples, Italy, on 18 April 1937. His only son, Werner, became a general in Hitler's army, and was killed near Sevastopol in 1944.

OPPOSITE

Field-Marshal Paul von Hindenburg was a hard-working professional soldier, articulate in speech and the written word, and also a capable amateur painter. He was a big man, six feet tall, with blue eyes, massive features and a square-looking head. His manner was slow, stolid and careful; he gave his loyalty to Kaiser, Fatherland and God, and was a gentleman of the old aristocracy. He was not the intellectual equal of his deputy Erich Ludendorff, who in fact did most of the work of this famous partnership; but unlike Ludendorff, Hindenburg was the very image of a German soldier, and the public took him to their hearts. This portrait, one of many, shows him in the light grey *Paletot* greatcoat with dark blue collar and poppy-red lining showing at the lapels, over a tunic with silver regimental collar lace. (Author's collection)

Paul von HINDENBURG (1847–1934), Generalfeldmarschall

Paul Ludwig von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg was born at Poznan in Prussian Poland on 2 October 1847, and was educated at cadet schools in Wahlstatt and Berlin. He first saw action at Koniggrätz in 1866, and again during the Franco-Prussian War. Subsequently appointed to the General Staff in 1878, he reaching general rank in 1905 and, with no apparent prospect of advancement, retired from the Army in 1911 at the age of 64 years.

On 22 August 1914 he was recalled to the colours and sent to the Eastern Front as commander of the 8th Army. He benefited from the planning of the staff officer Col Max Hoffmann, and from the energy and strategic grasp of his new chief of staff Gen Erich Ludendorff; but as commanding general, and an impressive and reassuring figure, he received much of the public credit for the stunning victories of Tannenberg and First Masurian Lakes. (It is irresistible to draw comparisons with the earlier Prussian military partnership of Blücher and Gneisenau in 1813–15.) In November 1914, Hindenburg was promoted

One of Hindenburg's *feldgrau* uniforms as a field-marshal. The general officer's four-pocket M1915 *Feldbluse* is in fact of a dark mouse-grey shade, with a plain dark grey-green stand-and-fall collar; the cap is of a slightly, and the breeches of a noticeably greener shade of *feldgrau*. The cap band and piping and the *Lampassen* are of the regulation *ponceau* or poppy-red.
Note the many thread loops added to the breast to take the pins of orders and decorations. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)

field-marshal and named commander-in-chief of the German and Austro-Hungarian forces on the Eastern Front.

Lack of resources, and the indifferent performance of his Austro-Hungarian allies, prevented any further decisive operations in the East after the victory at Gorlice-Tarnow in May 1915; but the reputation of the Hindenburg-Ludendorff team remained high enough for Hindenburg's appointment to replace Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff in August 1916 after the massive casualties in the latter's Verdun offensive and on the Somme.

Hindenburg's degree of actual responsibility for the decisions of the OHL during his and Ludendorff's tenure of command in 1916–18 – described above in the narrative chapter, and below in the entry on Ludendorff – is hard to fathom, but was apparently not great.

Named as Supreme Commander on the Kaiser's abdication in November 1918, Hindenburg provided a focus for loyalty and order during the months of turmoil and civil war which followed, when the Army virtually dissolved into the Free Corps movement. In March 1919 the Weimar Republic declared the foundation of a new national army, the Reichswehr; and in July, Hindenburg retired for the second time. He successfully ran for the presidency of the Republic in April 1925, fulfilling the largely symbolic role to which his age and intellect limited him, and apparently never giving up hope of an eventual restoration of the monarchy. He was re-elected in 1932 at the age of 85. Never an enthusiast for the National Socialists, he nevertheless appointed Adolf Hitler as chancellor of the coalition government after their success in the 1933 elections. Paul von Hindenburg died on his East Prussian estates on 2 August 1934, before the consequences of that appointment became clear; he was buried at Tannenberg.

Oskar von HUTIER (1857–1934), General der Infanterie

A cousin to Gen Ludendorff, Hutier was born at Erfurt on 27 August 1857. Commissioned in 1874, he entered the Kriegsakademie in 1885 and was soon attracting attention as a highly promising officer. He served in the General Staff Corps and became its chief quartermaster in 1911. Promoted commander of the prestigious 1st Guards Division at Berlin, he led it to war in August 1914 as part of Bülow's 2nd Army.

Hutier was present at Namur, the Marne and Arras, and was appointed commander of XXI Corps on the Eastern Front on 4 April 1915. His corps formed part of Eichhorn's 10th Army, with which he saw action at Vilna, Kovno and Lake Naroch. On 2 January 1917 he was assigned to command Army Detachment D on the Duna river south of Riga. On 22 April, by now a general of infantry, he was given command of the 8th Army.

On 3 September 1917, Hutier's forces took the Baltic port of Riga, a victory which effectively forced Russia out of the war. A feature of this action was the employment of so-called infiltration tactics by assault troops – the opportunistic advance of small, self-sufficient units to exploit local success. While this doctrine had already been tried with some success in the West (by both sides), its large-scale use at Riga led to it being named 'Hutier tactics'. On 6 September 1917, Hutier was rewarded with the Pour le Mérite. A month later, in what would be the war's only successful amphibious attacks, his troops took the Baltic Islands.

Transferred to the Western Front, Hutier would command the spearhead of Ludendorff's spring offensive in March 1918. For 'Operation Michael' his newly created 18th Army consisted of five corps with a total of 27 divisions, facing the right wing of Gen Gough's British 5th Army. After a short but intense bombardment his army, led through the fog by fast-moving Sturmtruppen, advanced some 40 miles into Allied territory and took 50,000 prisoners; Hutier was promptly awarded the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite on 23 March 1918. He retained command until the Armistice, and then led his troops back across the Rhine into Germany. In retirement Hutier became president of the German Officers' League; at the age of 77 he died in Berlin on 5 December 1934.

Colonel-General Alexander von Kluck; the rhyming possibilities of his name were (predictably) immortalised in a ribald song by the soldiers of the BEF. This portrait shows him in the full dress uniform of his honorary commission in the 3rd Guard Grenadier Regiment. (Author's collection)

Alexander von KLUCK (1846–1934), Generaloberst

Born in Münster on 20 May 1846, Alexander Heinrich Rudolph von Kluck was commissioned in a Westphalian infantry regiment, and saw his first active service in the 1866 war against Austria. He later fought in the Franco-Prussian War, and rose steadily through the ranks, becoming an adjutant and a specialist in training NCOs. Without passing through the Kriegsakademie, he became an Inspector-General in 1913, and was commissioned *à la suite* in the 3rd Grenadier Regiment.

At the outbreak of the war Gen von Kluck commanded the 1st Army, the largest of the seven armies in the West and deployed on the far right flank. Assisted by one of the most capable of Germany's staff officers, MajGen von Kuhl, his task was to march through Belgium, take Antwerp, attack the French left flank and encircle Paris from the north. After taking Brussels on 20 August his troops continued their march, fighting the British Expeditionary Force at the battles of Mons on

23 August and Le Cateau three days later; he forced the little BEF out of his path, but since they retreated southwards they were still able to play a part in the campaign. Moltke's decision to place the aggressive and impatient Gen von Kluck under the overall command of the more cautious Gen von Bülow from 17 August would have grave consequences.

On 27 August, free from Bülow's direct control, Kluck was still pushing towards Amiens on the extreme right flank of the German armies, in conformity with the original Schlieffen Plan; but he was tempted to swing south while still east of Paris, to cut the apparently beaten French 5th Army (Gen Lanrezac) away from the capital and destroy it. At this point Lanrezac counter-attacked westwards into the right flank of Bülow's 2nd Army, which was wheeling inside, i.e. on the left of Kluck's army. Checked at Guise and St Quentin by this attack, Bülow called for Kluck's support, giving the latter the excuse he wanted to wheel south while still east of Paris. He changed direction on 30 August, without seeking Moltke's prior approval, though it was tamely given after the event. On 4 September, Kluck crossed the River Marne.

The swing to the south exposed Kluck's own right flank to attack by the French 6th Army and Gen Gallieni's Paris garrison during 6–8 September. Both Kluck and Bülow coped with these attacks very ably; but a gap had opened up between their armies which was exploited by the Allies, and on 9 September the anxious Bülow ordered his 2nd Army to retreat northwards to the Aisne. Kluck had no option but to follow; by this 'miracle of the Marne' Gen Joffre had saved Paris, and destroyed the momentum of the Schlieffen Plan.

Seriously wounded by shrapnel on 28 March 1915, Gen von Kluck was forced to relinquish his command; on the same date he received the Pour le Mérite. Alexander von Kluck never got another command; he retired from active service in October 1916 with the honorary colonelcy-in-chief of the 49th Infantry Regiment. At the age of 88 he died in Berlin on 19 October 1934.

Wounded by shrapnel in March 1915 during a visit to his troops near Vailly, Kluck saw no further active service. Here he is seen in the pale grey general's greatcoat with dark blue collar and red-lined lapels. Immediately above the red-piped edge of the deep cuff is a broad black band, presumably a mark of mourning. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)

Otto LIMAN VON SANDERS (1855–1929), General der Kavallerie

Born on 18 February 1855 in Stolp, Pomerania, Liman started his military career in the Hessian Life Guards in 1874. Assigned to the 115th Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Army, he soon transferred into the cavalry. Promoted to major-general, he served on the General Staff until 1906, when he was given command of the 15th Cavalry Brigade. Five years later he was promoted lieutenant-general in command of the 22nd Infantry Division at Kassel. Liman was raised to the nobility in July 1913, adding the Scottish name of his late wife. That December the Kaiser sent this able, energetic but unpopular officer as head of a special military mission to advise on reforms to the army of Ottoman Turkey.

His mission was difficult and frustrating, involving both military and diplomatic duties. He became Inspector-General of the Turkish Army in January 1914, working to increase its efficiency; and that August he

Lieutenant-General Otto Liman von Sanders, commander of the Turkish 5th Army which held the Allies at bay during the Dardanelles campaign. This Pomeranian cavalryman was generally known as Liman, adding the 'von Sanders' when he was ennobled in 1913 in memory of his late wife Amelia (d.1906), who was of Scottish descent. He is portrayed wearing the M1915 double-breasted *Überrock* undress coat, in *feldgrau* with *ponceau*-red standing collar and cuff piping. (Author's collection)

accepted command of the Turkish 1st Army on the Bosphorus. In March 1915 he shifted to the command of the Turkish 5th Army facing the Allied landings at Gallipoli. Outnumbered, he nevertheless succeeded in containing the Allied beachhead until they were forced to evacuate; Liman was awarded the Pour le Mérite on 23 August 1915, and its Oakleaves on 10 January 1916. On 25 February 1918 he received command of Army Group F consisting of the Turkish 4th, 7th and 8th Armies fighting to resist Gen Allenby's advance in Palestine and Syria. This out-numbered Turkish-German command, denied resources by Constantinople and Berlin, was forced into headlong retreat at the battle of Megiddo in September 1918; Liman was nearly captured in bed at Nazareth.

When the Armistice was signed Liman returned to Constantinople to organise the repatriation of German personnel; he himself was held prisoner by the British for six months on Malta. Released in August, he retired from the Army in October 1919, and died in Munich on 22 August 1929.

Erich LUDENDORFF (1865–1937), General der Infanterie

This impatient, inflexible and humourless officer was born at Kruszewnia near Poznan in Prussian Poland on 9 April 1865, the son of a modest merchant family. Entering the Army via the Cadet Corps, he was commissioned into the infantry in 1883, and became a member of the General Staff from 1894. His energy and intelligence attracted the patronage of both Schlieffen and Moltke; he rose through a number of staff appointments to serve as head of the mobilisation department from 1908 to 1912, assisting with the fine tuning of the Schlieffen Plan. A military man in every sense of the word, Ludendorff considered peace merely as an interval between wars; in 1912 he was relegated to a brigade command for his tactless pursuit of a policy disagreement.

Mobilisation in July 1914 brought him back into staff employment, as quartermaster general to Gen von Bülow's 2nd Army. Intimately familiar with the planning, Ludendorff prepared and personally led the successful final assault on the Liège forts, thus getting the stalled Schlieffen Plan back on track. Within a week, on 22 August, he had been appointed chief of staff to Hindenburg's 8th Army on the Eastern Front, forming a partnership which in two years would lift him to the highest level of military authority. In August 1916 he was appointed, in name, Grand Quartermaster General but in effect deputy Chief of the General Staff.

The major points of Ludendorff's career between August 1916 and his dismissal on 26 October 1918 are described above in the narrative chapter and will not be repeated here.

After his dismissal Ludendorff briefly went into exile in Sweden, returning to Germany in spring 1919. He was involved in right-wing politics for the rest of his life, taking part in the failed Kapp Putsch of March 1920 in Berlin and Hitler's farcical Munich 'Beerhall Putsch' of November 1923. He entered the Reichstag as a National Socialist the following year, and ran for president against Hindenburg – the relationship of the two men never recovered after October 1918. Despite his extreme nationalism, during the 1930s Ludendorff to some extent distanced himself from the Nazis, refusing the rank of field-marshal which Hitler offered him. He died at Tutzing near Munich on 20 December 1937.

August von MACKENSEN (1849–1945), Generalfeldmarschall

The son of an estate manager, he was born on 6 December 1849 at Schmiedeberg near Leipnitz in Saxony. After studies at Halle University, in October 1969 Mackensen enlisted as a one-year volunteer in the 2nd Life Guard Hussar Regiment at Lissa (Posen). With this regiment he served as a Reserve officer in the Franco-Prussian War 1870–71. Decorated with the Iron Cross 2nd Class and promoted lieutenant in

ABOVE **General Erich Ludendorff was a hard-working, talented staff officer of great professional gifts but unattractive personality. His manner was harsh to his subordinates and tactless to his superiors; he was completely humourless, and the adulation following his early successes at Liège and on the Eastern Front went to his head. During 1917–18 he was, in practice, the most powerful man in Germany, but his reach outstripped his grasp. He gathered to himself the various patriotic leagues and the leaders of industry, and the OHL, through him, would exercise increasing influence over economic, political and even foreign policy questions. These were beyond Ludendorff's competence; he waged war as an end in itself, ignoring Clausewitz's great maxim. In this painting Ludendorff wears a mouse-grey M1915 *Bluse* with plain grey-green collar and concealed buttons. Below the cross of the Pour le Mérite at his throat hangs the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross which he received on 24 March 1918 for his early successes in the spring offensive. This was one of only five awards of this decoration made during the war. (Collection Alfred & Roland Umhey)**

RIGHT **He is photographed here wearing a double-breasted light grey *Litewka*, with silver-buttoned white collar patches. Under the *Litewka* a white vest or shirt was worn, with a standing collar protruding 0.75in–1.5in but no necktie. (Collection Alfred & Roland Umhey)**

the Reserve, he soon returned, at the request of his father, to resume his studies in agronomy at Halle University. But he was eager for a military career, and in 1873 he secured his father's permission to re-enter the 2nd Life Guard Hussars as a second lieutenant. Three years later Mackensen was promoted to adjutant of the 1st Cavalry Brigade in Königsberg; and soon, although he had never attended the Kriegsakademie, he found his way into the General Staff Corps as a captain.

From 1891 to 1893 he served as First ADC to Gen von Schlieffen. In 1894 Mackensen was assigned as lieutenant-colonel to the prestigious 1st Life Guard Hussar Regiment at Danzig, and three years later he was promoted colonel. His glittering career brought him to the notice of the emperor's entourage, and in 1898 he was attached as orderly to the Kaiser when the latter travelled to Palestine. Ennobled in 1899 and promoted major-general in 1900, Mackensen was soon assigned to the newly created Life Guard Hussar Brigade as general *à la suite* to the commander. He remained in this post until the start of the war, by which time he was also commander of XVII Corps at Danzig.

Serving in East Prussia, his corps formed part of the 8th Army. It was badly mauled at Gumbinnen, but the memory was soon wiped out by the victories of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. Passing with his corps into the newly formed 9th Army, Mackensen marched into Russian Poland. When Hindenburg became commander-in-chief of the Eastern Front on 2 November 1914, Mackensen succeeded him as commander of the 8th Army. During bitter fighting in Poland during winter 1914/15, Mackensen received the Pour le Mérite on 27 November and promotion to colonel-general on 17 December. Reassigned to western Galicia, he took command on 16 April 1915 of the German 11th and Austro-Hungarian 4th Armies. With the assistance of his very able chief of staff, Col Hans von Seeckt, Mackensen drove the Russians out of Galicia and all of Russian Poland in the Gorlice-Tarnow offensive of May 1915. By now Mackensen had become the most popular commander in the German Army next to Hindenburg; he receiving the Order of the Black Eagle on 10 May 1915 and, on 3 June, the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite. Three weeks later he was

Honorary appointment as the colonel-in-chief of a regiment, or an *à la suite* commission to it, were always considered to be a great honour, and generals awarded such distinctions often preferred to wear the regimental uniforms to which they were thus entitled. Many could therefore choose between three or four different uniforms. For example, August von Mackensen could correctly wear either the regulation general officer's uniform; that of a royal aide-de-camp; that of his honorary commission in the 1.Leibhusaren-Regiment; or that of the *Chef* of the 129.Infanterie-Regiment (although photographs of him in the latter are very rare).

ABOVE **Mackensen in the M1910 uniform of an ADC to the Kaiser, indicated by the aiguillettes and the special collar patches. (Author's collection)**
OPPOSITE, LEFT **The same uniform, but with the full dress waist belt. The deep cuff turnbacks (6ins–7.5ins) were typical for high-ranking officers. Note the different breast pockets in these two photos – one with slash pockets only, the other with regulation scalloped flaps. (Anne S.K.Brown Collection, Providence, USA)**
OPPOSITE, RIGHT **Mackensen in his favourite uniform, that of the 1st Life Hussars – he wore this until his death. This post-war portrait shows the magnificent regimental busby, and – beneath his Pour le Mérite – the very rarely awarded Grand Cross of the Iron Cross. Note that the royal ADC's aiguillettes were a permanent distinction, worn on other uniforms. (Author's collection)**

promoted field-marshal; another honour, on 27 November that year, was the colonelcy-in-chief of the 129th Infantry Regiment.

In September 1915, Mackensen was entrusted with command of the Heeresgruppe Mackensen, a combination of German and Austro-Hungarian troops, with which he directed the invasion of Serbia from the north, while the Bulgarian 1st Army advanced from the east. Mackensen succeeded where the Austrians had failed, defeating the Serbs and driving the remnants of their armies into the mountains. His troops took up defensive positions in Macedonia; but with the ever growing need for men on other fronts, early in 1916 the OHL withdrew most of his German units, leaving him with a largely Bulgarian command.

When Romania entered the war on 27 August 1916, Mackensen was given a force of German, Bulgarian, Austro-Hungarian and some Turkish units. In September 1916 he invaded Romania from the south, entering Dobrudja early that month. Fighting his way north, he took the important Black Sea port of Costanza on 19 October; four weeks later his troops crossed the Danube and advanced upon Bucharest, which they entered on 6 December. (Part of Mackensen's Heeresgruppe for this campaign was Gen Erich von Falkenhayn's 9th Army.) Fighting continued until mid-January 1917, pushing the remnants of the Romanians and Russians out of Wallachia. To honour his success,

Mackensen was awarded, as only the second general of the war, the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross (a decoration awarded only five times, and one of those to the Kaiser). Establishing himself in Bucharest, Mackensen split his army group into three armies which occupied the conquered territory until the end of the war.

In November 1918 he took his troops via Hungary back to Germany. In mid-December, Mackensen was arrested in Budapest from where he was taken to Saloniki; he was only released in November 1919. Retiring from the Army in 1920, he played a leading part in German war veterans' associations. After the death of Hindenburg the old field-marshal became the last symbol of the traditions of the former Imperial Army. Hitler tried to use him for propaganda purposes, but Mackensen was always sceptical towards the new regime. He was present at the funeral of the former Kaiser in 1941; thereafter he retreated from public life, finally dying in his 96th year at Burghorn, near Celle, on 8 November 1945.

Georg von der MARWITZ (1856–1929), General der Kavallerie

Born on his father's Pomeranian estate near Stolp on 3 July 1856, Marwitz was commissioned into the Guard Cavalry in 1875. After attending the Kriegsakademie he held a number of staff posts and field commands, including five years at the head of a cavalry regiment from 1900. He was appointed chief of staff of XVIII Corps, and Inspector-General of the Cavalry in 1912. At the outbreak of war he took command of a group of cavalry divisions, and was soon promoted lieutenant-general.

After taking part in the invasion of Belgium and France, where it protected the flank of the 1st Army during its retreat after the battle of the Marne, Marwitz's cavalry group was dissolved in late December 1914. He was then posted to the Eastern Front as commander of the newly formed XXXIII Reserve Corps, receiving the Pour le Mérite on 7 March 1915 for his actions in February of that year at the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes. Sent to the Carpathians, he distinguished himself in command of the Beskidenkorps – a specially assembled ski corps – and earned the Oakleaves to his Pour le Mérite on 14 May 1915.

After falling ill from 18 October until 6 November 1915, Marwitz was transferred to the Western Front as commander of VI Corps in the Péronne area; but in summer 1916 he and his corps were transferred to the Russian Front to support the German forces against the Brusilov Offensive. Appointed ADC to the Kaiser on 6 October 1916, he returned to France to command the 2nd Army on 17 December that year. In November 1917 his army suffered heavily from the British tank-supported attack at Cambrai, but steadily regained the lost ground by sharp and effective counter-attacks. In March 1918 his divisions participated in Ludendorff's 'Michael' offensive, but failed to take the critically important railway junction of Amiens. After months of bloody fighting Marwitz suffered a major setback when the Allied counter-offensive opened on 8 August 1918. Marwitz was transferred to lead the 5th Army on the Verdun front on 22 September 1918.

Retiring in December 1918, Georg von der Marwitz died from heart failure at his Pomeranian estate on 27 October 1929.

Helmuth von MOLTKE (1848–1916), Generaloberst

Born into a Junker family at Gersdorf, Mecklenburg, on 23 May 1848, Helmuth Johann Ludwig von Moltke was the nephew of the renowned Prussian general Helmuth von Moltke 'the Elder', famous for his victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870–71. The young man joined the Army in 1869; his military training was thorough, and he gained experience of command in several Guard regiments. Becoming adjutant to his uncle when the latter was chief of staff, he benefited from a sound education in staff operations. He was promoted colonel in 1895 and major-general four years later. In 1900 he commanded the 1st Guards Division in the rank of lieutenant-general; and in 1904 he was appointed quartermaster general. Honorary commissions included the colonelcy-in-chief of the 38th Fusilier Regiment and *à la suite* in the 1st Guard Grenadier Regiment.

The Graf von Moltke's family heritage and gentlemanly character pleased the Kaiser, who appointed him in 1906 as Chief of the General Staff at the OHL. Moltke accepted this appointment only after some hesitation, as he was aware that his character was not strong enough to oppose the emperor's interfering and overbearing nature. His misgivings were well founded – not because the Kaiser interfered with OHL decisions in August 1914, but because the cultivated and artistic Moltke proved a far more nervous and indecisive commander than the stolid Gen Joffre who faced him.

Moltke's pre-war changes to the Schlieffen Plan, weakening the armies allocated to the vital 'right hook' through Belgium and northern France while strengthening the defensive forces on the German left wing, were one of the causes of its failure. Another was his over-hasty transfer on 25 August of two corps from the Western to the Eastern Front, which condemned these divisions to play the same futile role as Grouchy's at Waterloo. Most importantly, Moltke's nervous temperament prompted him to violate OHL doctrine by interfering with the dispositions of the field commanders – interference which was aggravated by the lack of up-to-date information reaching him along everlengthening lines of communication.

Moltke's intervention in placing the energetic Gen von Kluck's 1st Army under the overall authority of the more cautious Gen von Bülow's 2nd Army was a serious error, preventing Kluck from swinging far enough west to envelop Paris. When Bülow called for

Colonel-General Helmuth von Moltke was a tall, well-built, bald-headed man; but though a soldierly figure, he was a poor horseman, who more than once fell from his saddle during manoeuvres. The Kaiser used to call him *'Der traurige Julius'*, teasing him for his naturally lugubrious expression. He was more cultivated than most of his caste; apart from playing the cello and reading Goethe, he was also a painter – none of these being interests which German officers associated with the function of Chief of the General Staff. His introverted nature made him hesitate before accepting the post, since he doubted his own capabilities in a crisis. (Author's collection)

support from Kluck, and the latter changed direction to march south while still east of Paris, Moltke retrospectively approved the manoeuvre; by now the Chief of the General Staff was out of touch with developments and events were rapidly slipping from his control. The 'miracle of the Marne' was an extremely close-run thing, but French victory owed much more to Joffre than German withdrawal did to Moltke.

Replaced at the head of the OHL by Gen von Falkenhayn on 14 September 1914, and rewarded with the Pour le Mérite on 7 August 1915, Helmuth von Moltke died suddenly from a heart attack in Berlin on 18 June 1916.

Remus von WOYRSCH (1847–1920), Generalfeldmarschall

Born at Pilsnitz near Breslau on 4 February 1847, Woyrsch enlisted in the Army in 1860, becoming an officer in 1866. After service as a lieutenant in the wars of 1866 and 1870–71 he joined the General Staff, and rose to be colonel of the Guard Fusilier Regiment in 1896. One year later he was promoted major-general, and in 1901 he was lieutenant-general commanding the 12th Division at Neisse. In 1903–04 he commanded VI Corps at Breslau, being promoted general of infantry in 1905. After 51 years of service, Woyrsch retired from the Army in 1911; but due to his infantry experience he was recalled to service when the war broke out, to command the Silesian Landwehr Corps on the Eastern Front.

Colonel-General Remus von Woyrsch, seen in the full dress uniform of the 1.Garde-Regiment zu Fuss in which he received a commission *à la suite*. Special distinctions are the silver collar lace and the Swedish cuffs with silver Guard *Litzen;* the regimental facing colour was white. Woyrsch first enlisted at the age of 13 in 1860; recalled in 1914 after five years in retirement, he served on the Polish sector of the Eastern Front until the end of 1917. By the time he died in August 1920 he had spent 60 years in uniform. (Author's collection)

Fighting in co-operation with the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, Woyrsch's command distinguished itself at Rava-Russka, saving their allies from disaster by covering their retreat. On 14 October 1914 he was also given the command of the Armeeabteilung Woyrsch, a detachment that on 29 August 1916 would become part of the Heeresgruppe Woyrsch until the end of that year. During this period, always serving in southern Poland, Woyrsch fought successful battles at Thorn and at Sienno. From 1917 onwards his command reverted to an Armeeabteilung once more, remaining on the Polish front. Woyrsch was promoted field-marshal in 1917, and his force was disbanded on 31 December of that year after the Russian collapse. His accumulated honours included the Pour le Mérite (25 October 1914), its Oakleaves (23 July 1915), a commission *à la suite* in the 1st Foot Guard Regiment, and the colonelcy-in-chief of both the 51st Infantry Regiment (21 November 1916) and Austro-Hungarian 158th Infantry Regiment (6 June 1918).

Retiring at his own request, the aged veteran was recalled once more after the Armistice to be given command of the southern German border area. Woyrsch died on 6 August 1920.

Unidentified Bavarian general wearing red-piped field-grey uniform with *Alt-Larisch* collar patches and the aiguillettes of an ADC to the king, and carrying the Bavarian general's helmet with white-over-light blue feather plumes. He displays at his throat the Bavarian Order of Merit. (Author's collection)

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THE PLATES

A1: Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen

The crown prince is illustrated wearing the 1st Life Hussars officer's full dress to which his *à la suite* commission in the regiment entitled him. It is in black, braided and corded with silver, the pelisse trimmed with white fur; the light brown fur busby has a scarlet bag and the traditional large silver death's-head badge. The black breeches, embellished only with a silver sidestripe, are tucked into silver-trimmed hussar boots. This was the prince's favourite uniform; he was sometimes seen wearing it with a greatcoat instead of the pelisse.

A2: Kaiser Wilhelm II

The emperor wears the parade dress of the Gardes du Corps; the helmet has a special pattern silver-plated eagle with a gilded crown. The special black parade cuirass was presented to the regiment by the emperor in 1897 to commemorate the anniversary of his grandfather's birthday. Thereafter it was worn for New Year's parades and on other special ceremonial occasions; from 1912 onwards a gorget trophy was worn on the breastplate. The emperor holds an Army field-marshal's baton, and poses with his cape-style greatcoat thrown over his shoulder and covering his deformed left arm. This was the way many Germans liked to see their Kaiser, but the bellicose image made many

Crown Prince Wilhelm (second left) as commander of the 5th Army on the Verdun front, 1916. He wears his familiar 1st Life Hussars service cap with a pair of motoring goggles, a greatcoat with a fur-lined collar, and laced field boots with strapped spurs. The prince was so fond of his Death's-Head Hussars uniform – see Plate A1 – that when he died he left instructions that he should be cremated wearing it. (Collection of the Royal Army Museum, Brussels, Belgium)

neighbouring states uneasy. Even in a period when it was entirely normal for monarchs to wear military uniform, the German emperor's enthusiasm for the trappings of war was notable – although he never heard a shot fired in anger.

A3: Grossherzog Wilhelm Ernst von Saxe-Weimar

Saxony had two heavy cavalry regiments, of which the 2nd Cavalry Regiment were also known as Carabineers. Here the Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst wears the 'corn-flower blue' regimental uniform with black facings and gold-black braid edging the cuffs, collar and front. His helmet in the Prussian Cuirassier style bears the Saxon coat of arms in the middle of the plate, and parade feather plumes. In contrast to those used by the other German states these were combed out so lightly that even a faint breeze made them whirl in the air.

B1: General Alexander von Kluck

The commanding general of the 1st Army wore, as well as his regulation general's dress, this uniform marking his honorary commission *à la suite* to the 3rd Grenadier Regiment. The embroidery on his collar and cuff patches is of regimental pattern. He wears the standard Imperial German Army general officer's helmet displaying the Guard eagle plate; the white-over-black feather plumes indicate that he is in the Prussian service.

B2: Generaloberst Josias von Heeringen

The colonel-general commanding 7th Army in 1914 wears the general officer's dark blue peacetime parade dress or *Friedensuniform*, faced with *ponceau* (poppy) red. His collar shows the traditional general's embroidery illustrated at B3 and the cuffs the embroidery as B4. His aiguillette indicates an appointment as aide-de-camp to the emperor. He wears the same helmet, gilt and silver epaulettes, and silver and black tasselled waist sash as Gen von Kluck, B1.

B3: General's collar insignia

Prussia, Saxony and Württemberg used this pattern of gold bullion embroidery on general officers' collars and collar patches. It is generally called the *Alt-Larisch* pattern, since it was an adaptation of the decoration on the coats of the Prussian Alt-Larisch Infantry Regiment at the time of Frederick the Great. Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Bavaria used their own patterns.

B4: General's cuff insignia

The gold bullion cuff 'loops' displayed on the general officer's *Friedensuniform*.

B5: General Graf von Zeppelin

Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin (1838–1917), born in Baden, was commissioned in 1858; but he then travelled to America, and served with the Union Army in the Civil War – where he made his first balloon ascent. Returning to Germany, he saw active service in the wars of 1866 and 1870–71, retiring with the rank of general of cavalry in 1891. He then devoted himself to aeronautical research. With the unification of the German states into the Second Reich in 1871, the Württemberg cavalry became part of the Imperial Army. In 1871 Württemberg had

ABOVE **The *Überrock* for officers was a popular, plain, three-quarter-length double-breasted frock coat worn for off-duty functions. For the Prussian pre-war dark blue version, see Plate C1; this example with seven – rather than six – pairs of buttons appears to be the Bavarian light blue version. Decoration was limited to a *ponceau*-red standing collar and cuff piping. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)**

RIGHT **The dark blue shabraque and holster covers for a Prussian general – see Plate B2. Edged in gold braid with black lines, they bear the star of the Order of the Black Eagle below the crown in bullion embroidery. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)**

two Dragoon and two Lancer (Ulan) regiments; the latter became the 19th and 20th Ulan Regiments in the national numbered sequence, and Gen von Zeppelin was given an *à la suite* commission in the 19th, or 1.Württembergisches Ulanen-Regiment 'König Karl'. The unit wore dark blue lancer-cut uniform with red facings and white metal buttons; the top of the *tschapska* was also red, and the plumes showed the national colours of red and black within the white. Note the two stars of full general's rank on the pads of the epaulettes.

C1: Generaloberst Graf von Moltke
The head of the OHL from 1906 to September 1914, Count von Moltke is illustrated before the outbreak of war, wearing the popular general officer's undress uniform of *Schirmmütze* (service cap) and double-breasted *Überrock* (frock coat) in dark blue faced and piped with *ponceau*-red. Note the *Lampassen* in the same shade of red – double 4cm trouser stripes divided by a piping – which identified general officers. More junior General Staff Corps officers wore the same stripes but in crimson. The cap bears the usual twin cockades, in red-white-black for the Reich, above black-white-black for Prussia. The shoulder cords (see Plate E) are of interwoven gold and silver/black, on *ponceau*-red underlay, with the three silver stars of this rank.

C2: Generaloberst Moritz, Freiherr von Bissing
Baron von Bissing started the war as commander of VII Corps. On 24 November 1914 he became General-gouverneur (Governor-General) of occupied Belgium, a post he held until his death on 18 April 1917, at Vilvoorde near Brussels. After a state funeral his body was transported to Berlin and buried at the Invalidenfriedhof. Gen von Bissing had a commission *à la suite* in the Gardes du Corps Regiment; here he wears the general's undress *Überrock*, as C1, with that regiment's white and red service cap.

C3: Generalfeldmarschall Prinz Leopold von Bayern
Prince Leopold of Bavaria wears the Bavarian heavy cavalry officer's bright blue *Überrock* faced and piped in red. The leather *Pickelhaube* helmet bears the Bavarian royal arms and other fittings in silvered metal. The dark blue breeches bear the usual red *Lampassen*. The Bavarian national colours of light blue and silver are displayed in the undress braid waist and shoulder belts. His shoulder cords show the two crossed silver batons of field-marshal's rank, and he carries the undress baton.

D: THE IMPERIAL NAVY

D1: Vizeadmiral Graf von Spee
Maximilian Johannes Maria Hubertus von Spee (1861–1914), of Danish birth, entered the Imperial Navy in 1878. At the outbreak of war he was commanding the East Asia Cruiser Squadron based at Tsingtao, China. Ordered to return to Germany, he led the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Nürnberg*, *Dresden* and *Leipzig* across the Pacific, fighting a successful action against a Royal Navy squadron off Coronel on 1 November 1914. After refuelling in Chile, Adm Spee was ordered to capture the Falkland Islands. Encountering a superior British force under Adm Sturdee south of the islands, Spee's squadron was destroyed on 8 December; the admiral went down with the *Scharnhorst*, and his two sons were also lost.

Grossadmiral von Tirpitz; see Plate D2, and commentary for notes on his career. Here he wears the regulation service uniform of his rank, the coat without white lapels or cuff patches. (Author's collection)

Admiral Count von Spee is shown in 'small summer dress': a white-topped service cap, double-breasted blue frock coat, white trousers and shoes. It displays the same sleeve rank insignia – six rings below a crown – as on the full dress uniform. A dagger replaces the sword, hanging from the black leather waist belt on two slings.

D2: Grossadmiral Graf von Tirpitz
Alfred von Tirpitz (1849–1930), born at Küstrin, Brandenburg, on 19 March 1849, was a man of extraordinary abilities and energy who is justly called the 'father of the German Navy'. He enlisted in the Prussian Navy in 1865 and became an officer four years later, subsequently becoming Germany's leading torpedo specialist. In 1892–96 he was Chief of the Naval Staff at OKM; he later commanded the East Asian Cruiser Squadron in China; in 1897 he was appointed Minister for the Navy, a post he held for nearly 19 years; he was ennobled in 1900, promoted full admiral in 1903, and in 1911 was named to the unique rank of grand admiral. He enjoyed a dominant relationship over the young Kaiser, who supported Tirpitz's driving ambition to build a world class navy, and in only 16 years he raised the German fleet to a position second only to the Royal Navy. The driven and anglophobic Tirpitz made many enemies at home, and he was denied the operational command in 1914. His resignation in March 1916 was

accepted, to his chagrin. When he saw his surface fleet left virtually idle he became an enthusiast for submarine warfare, and successfully argued for its unlimited extension.

Count von Tirpitz is shown in the naval officer's full dress uniform, with the distinctions of his unique rank; the white lining is displayed on the turned-back lapels. The naval version of the marshal's baton was different in colour and embelished with anchors.

D3: Kaiser Wilhelm II in naval uniform

One of many uniforms designed for himself by the emperor. The admiral's coat differs in the cuffs, which are turn-back and embroidered with foliate lace, instead of the normal plain cuffs with three-point white patches, gold stripes and crown.

E: GENERALS' FIELD UNIFORMS

The uniforms worn by generals in the field were normally of the regulation M1907/1910 and M1915 models, but individuals often ordered tunics that differed in detail from the regulation patterns. Some simply ignored the regulations through personal preference, and it was popular among senior generals to incorporate the regimental features to which they were entitled by *à la suite* honorary commissions. When field tunics with regimental or even plain collars were worn, it was sometimes impossible to distinguish general officer's rank unless one was close enough to see details of the shoulder cords.

The M1910 field tunic (*Feldrock*) for generals was of fine *feldgrau* cloth, single-breasted with eight exposed front buttons. Unlike that for other officers, it had internal breast pockets with 13cm external scallop-shaped flaps; the internal skirt pockets showed conventional external slanted flaps with rounded corners, and all pocket buttons were concealed. The cuff turn-backs were noticeably deeper than for other officers. The stand-and-fall collar, cuffs and front edge were piped in red, as were long triangular flaps each side of the rear vent; these had a button at the apex in the small of the waist, and another at the base. The general officers' gold bullion thread collar devices were hand-embroidered on *ponceau*-red patches sewn to the collar, and the shoulder cords displayed insignia of rank.

This tunic continued to be worn in parallel with the wartime M1915 *Bluse*. The main differences of the M1915 were a fly front concealing the buttons; field grey collar patches with the devices embroidered in dull gold; and button-through flaps on the skirt pockets. The regulation alternative was the M1915 *Kleiner Rock* ('small tunic'). This was double-breasted with two rows of six buttons, but was normally worn with the top two unfastened and two triangular 'lapels' folded open, showing *ponceau*-red lining. The fall collar, front edge, cuffs and rear flaps were piped in red; and the general's rank devices were displayed on red collar patches.

E1: Generalfeldmarschall Paul von Hindenburg

When Gen von Hindenburg was recalled from retirement in August 1914 he returned to service wearing his old blue Prussian peacetime uniform; it is recorded that his wife had to air it for several days to get rid of the smell of mothballs. Hindenburg was commissioned *à la suite* to the 3.Garde-Regiment zu Füss, and soon adopted the regimental insignia on the collar and shoulders. Here he wears an M1910 tunic without breast pockets, and with the regiment's dull silver *Litzen* on yellow collar patches. The shoulder

Before the war it was not unusual to honour foreign royalty with honorary military ranks, e.g. Wilhelm II was a field-marshal in the British Army. King Leopold II of Belgium was honoured with the rank of admiral in the German Navy; these are his full dress uniform and hat – cf Plate D2. (Collection of the Royal Army Museum, Brussels, Belgium)

The magnificently moustachioed ColGen von Eberhardt, commanding XV Reserve Corps, displays the campaign helmet cover with the Guard helmet plate and chin scales showing under the cloth. See Plate F. (Author's collection)

cords are the regulation interwoven gold and silver, but on regimental yellow underlay instead of general's red. The sole indication of his rank are the crossed silver marshal's batons pinned to the cords. The peaked field cap has the *ponceau*-red band and piping for general officers, and he carries the undress marshal's baton, which resembled a walking stick.

E2: Shoulder cords of a Generalfeldmarschall

For all general officers these consisted of three interwoven cords in gold/silver/gold, on a *ponceau*-red underlay. The central cord also showed tiny chevrons of the state colour: black for Prussia, light blue for Bavaria and green for Saxony. Rank distinctions were shown by silver stars and batons: none for Generalmajor; one for Generalleutnant; two for General der Infanterie, Kavallerie, Artillerie; three for Generaloberst (General-Inspektor); four for Generaloberst with a field-marshal's command; and crossed batons for Generalfeldmarschall. The gilt crowned 'WR' cypher identified an appointment as ADC to the Kaiser, e.g. FM von Mackensen, Gen von der Marwitz.

E3: Shoulder cords of a Generaloberst

E4: General Erich Ludendorff

The Grand Quartermaster General wears a version of the M1915 *Bluse*, identifiable by the fly front. He has chosen to have this tailored with a plain dark green collar; normally the collar showed field-grey patches, 9.5cm long by 4.5cm wide, with the *Alt-Larisch* devices embroidered in dull gold.

E5: Generalfeldmarschall August von Mackensen

The commander of an army group of German/Austro-Hungarian troops in the Balkans, he is shown wearing the

Colonel-General Alexander von Linsingen; aged 64 in 1914, he led II Corps as part of Kluck's 1st Army. Transferred to the Eastern Front, he commanded successively the *Südarmee* (a mixed German/Austro-Hungarian force), the *Bugarmee* ('Army of the River Bug'), and the *Heeresgruppe Linsingen*. In 1918 he became military commandant of Berlin with the title of *Oberbefehlshaber in den Marken und Gouverneur von Berlin*; but he soon gave up this post amid the revolutionary chaos which followed the Armistice. Considered 'less than perfectly Aryan' by the Nazis, he died in Hanover in June 1935. Here he wears the *Schirmmütze* peaked service cap and the popular *Litewka,* in this case with white collar patches; note the darker (presumably red) piping around the bottom and front of the collar and the edges of the button-over front plastron. (Author's collection)

general officer's M1910 uniform with breast pockets (the flaps almost hidden here by his decorations) and the undress brocade waist belt in silver and black. As an ADC to the Kaiser he wears *ponceau*-red collar patches with the ADC's gold *Kolbenlitzen,* and gold cord aiguillettes. Note that the generals' cuff turn-backs reach nearly to the elbows; these were true doubled turn-backs, and maps or other papers were sometimes slipped inside them.

The cut of the M1903 *Litewka* for officers. The body and collar were sometimes in slightly contrasting shades of mouse-grey and grey-green. This example has scarlet piping and matt silver buttons, but the plain collar patches and the shoulder cords are missing. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)

F1: General officer wearing *Litewka* and *Paletot*
This representative figure shows a general of cavalry in field dress, complete with the *Pickelhaube* of M1860 Dragoon style in its campaign cover. He wears the M1903 *Litewka*, a popular officers' undress tunic; in essentials this resembled the M1915 *Kleiner Rock* described above, but bore on the stand-and-fall collar solid colour patches with a single button. This officer has white patches and silver buttons, perhaps indicating an *à la suite* commission to a Cuirassier regiment. The elegant *Paletot* greatcoat was double-breasted with two rows of six gold buttons but normally worn open at the throat; the collar was dark blue (Bavaria, light blue) and the lining including the lapel facing was *ponceau*-red. There was red piping at the cuffs and all around the pocket flaps; on vertical three-point flaps each side of the rear waist; and edging an integral rear half-belt with a single button, set in the small of the waist. A long rear vent, fastened internally with six small buttons, extended from the waist to the hem. Note the use of the deep cuffs to carry papers.

From 1915 generals began to wear a simplified *Einheitsmantel*. This was single-breasted, with six front buttons. The deep fall collar was field-grey, but the red lining still showed when the upper lapels were folded open; the other noticeable difference was the removal of the rear three-point false pocket flaps.

F2: Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen
The crown prince, serving as 5th Army commander in 1914–15 but not yet wearing the 'Blue Max' awarded him in August 1915, wears a *feldgrau* field uniform of Hussar design, with a corded and frogged *Attila* tunic. His peaked regimental field cap has a black crown, red band and white piping, and displays – between the national and state cockades – the death's-head badge of his regiment, the 1st Life Hussars.

F3: Kaiser Wilhelm II in field uniform
This is in fact based on a post-war portrait of the exiled Kaiser. The fur-lined field-grey greatcoat has a deep shoulder cape. The Kaiser was an enthusiast for uniforms, many of which he designed for himself, and although he had no experience of real warfare he enjoyed being depicted

General von Emmich of X Corps in a uniform of the 73rd Fusilier Regiment from Hanover; compare with the slightly differing uniform in Plate G3. (Author's collection)

striking heroic poses. In the background is the emperor's personal standard, carried by an NCO of his ever-present bodyguard from the 1.Leib-Gendarmerie-Regiment.

G1: Generaloberst Karl von Einem von Rothmaler
General Einem was a cavalryman, and was honoured by a commission *à la suite* to the 4th Cuirassier Regiment. Here we see the commander of the 3rd Army wearing a *feldgrau* uniform in the same style as the full dress version, retaining the silver braid on the standing collar and cuffs. The normal red facings of this regiment are omitted, the cap band being replaced by a less visible dark green. He wears the silver-black undress waist belt, and carries a heavy cavalry sabre.

G2: Generaloberst Max, Freiherr von Hausen
The commander of the 3rd Army in 1914 – replaced after the defeat on the Marne by Gen Einem – was ADC to the King of Saxony, and commissioned *à la suite* to Jäger-Bataillon Nr.12 ('1st Saxon'). Here he wears the Saxon general's dark blue and red field cap with the greenish M1910 uniform of this battalion, without breast pockets and retaining the traditional Saxon cuff; it is embellished with the gold aiguillettes of a Saxon ADC. He wears no collar insignia; his interwoven shoulder cords, on green underlay, bear in silver the three stars of his rank, the king's crowned cipher and the number '12'.

G3: General der Infanterie Otto von Emmich
General Emmich commanded X Corps in Gen von Bülow's 2nd Army, and his men spearheaded the attack towards Liège and the River Meuse at the outbreak of war. He held a

commission *à la suite* to Füsilier-Regiment 'Prinz Albert von Preussen' (Hannoverisches) Nr.73, which traced its lineage to Hanoverian units which fought for the British crown in the 18th century. He wears an M1910 infantry officer's tunic with added general's breast pockets, but preserving the standard officer's three-button cuff flaps. On his right forearm he wears the sky blue cuff band with gold lettering 'GIBRALTAR', worn by all ranks of IR Nr.73, IR Nr.79 & JB Nr.10 in commemoration of the service of the former 3rd, 5th & 6th Inf Regts of the Hanoverian Army alongside British troops in the epic defence of that fortress in 1779–83. His shoulder cords are on infantry officer's white underlay, and bear in silver '73' between two rank stars. The general's gold *alt-Larisch* embroidery is fixed to the collar without the normal *ponceau*-red patches.

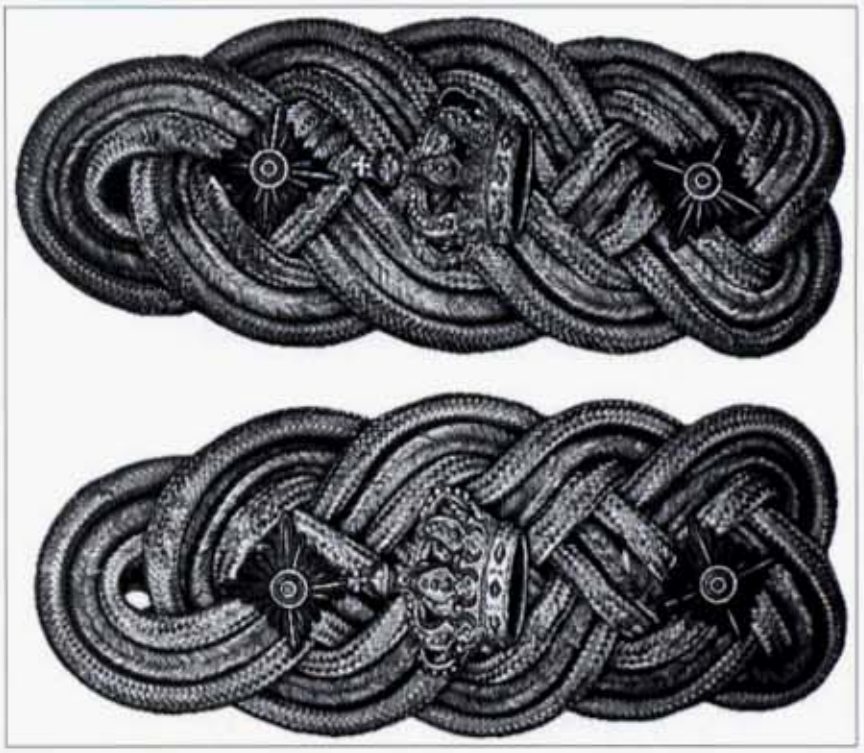
H: BAVARIA

H1: Bavarian general officers' collar insignia

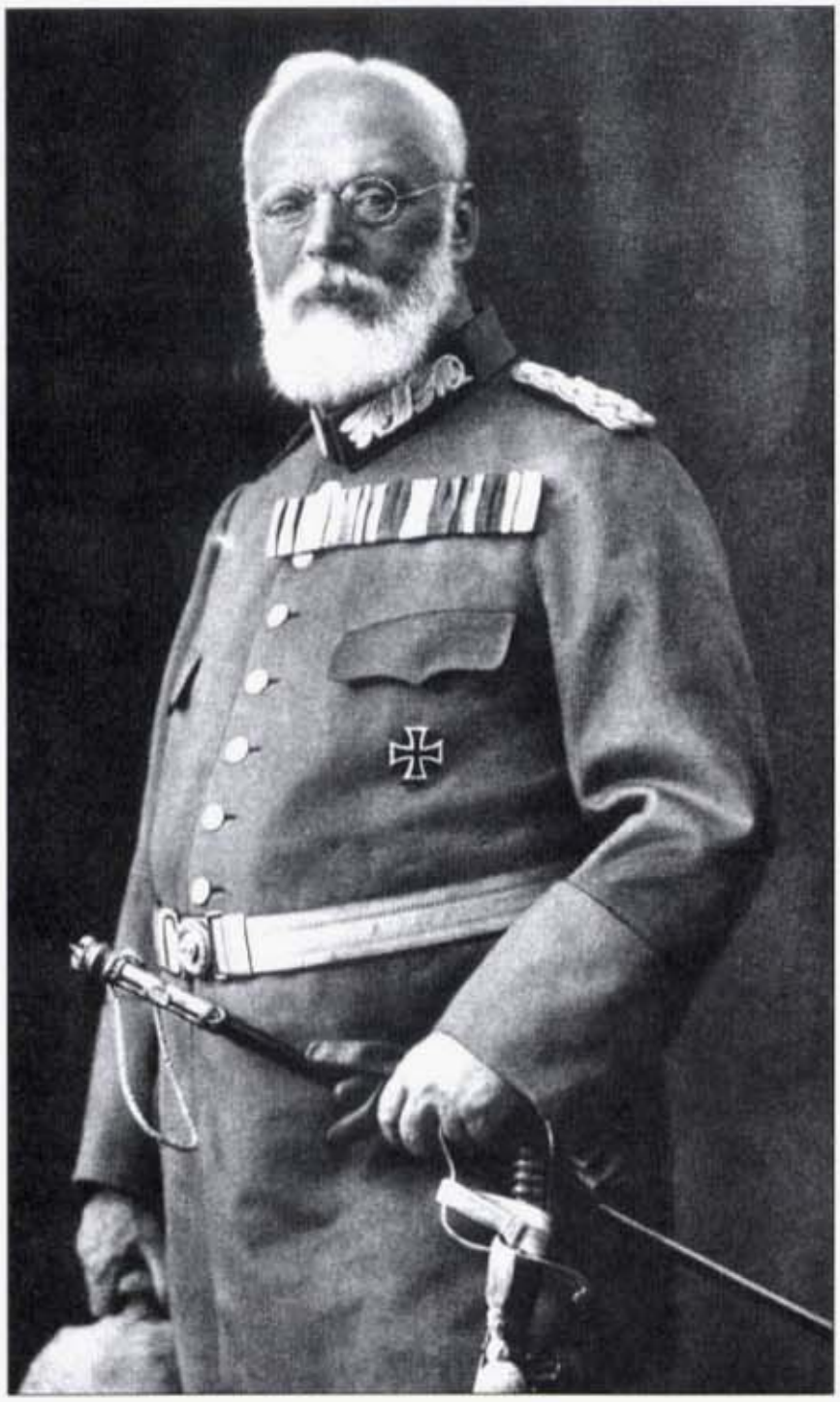
This laurel-leaf pattern in silver bullion thread on a *ponceau*-red patch – shown with front to the left – was in use until early 1916; thereafter Bavarian generals began to adopt the Prussian *Alt-Larisch* pattern, but in silver.

H2: König Ludwig III von Bayern

The King of Bavaria is illustrated as a field-marshal in a field-grey uniform based upon the M1910 pattern. The only difference from the other German states was the collar patch insignia; but note (cf H1) that the king is wearing them reversed, with the 'curl' to the rear. It seems that the printed regulations for this type of collar patch were unclear. The very broad and deep ribbon bar is another feature typical for its time.



Shoulder cords of a Bavarian general serving as an adjutant to the king. The basic design of one silver between two gold cords was differenced for Bavaria only by tiny light blue chevrons worked into the silver cord at intervals. Two silver stars indicate the rank of full general; here they flank the gilt crown of an adjutant, without a royal cipher – adjutants of all the other states also bore a cipher, as in Plate E2. (Hermann-Historica oHG, Munich, Germany)



H3: Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern

This most capable of the commanders of royal blood is depicted wearing a version of the M1910 uniform with slanted breast pocket flaps. Apart from the Bavarian generals' collar insignia it is otherwise conventional.

H4: General der Infanterie Ritter von Fasbender

The commander of the Bavarian I Corps was commissioned *à la suite* to the Bavarian 1.Jäger-Bataillon. He wears a version of the general's M1915 *Bluse* with slanted, button-through breast pocket flaps. His collar bears no insignia of rank but is edged with the silver/sky blue checkered braid of Bavarian officers; his rank is only discernible from his shoulder cords, on green underlay. His headdress is the typical Jäger shako with its canvas campaign cover. The only immediate indication of general officer's rank are the *ponceau*-red *Lampassen* on his breeches – which he wears, interestingly, with a combat soldier's puttees and ankle boots.

King Ludwig III of Bavaria in *feldgrau* – see Plate H3. Note the reversed Bavarian general officer's collar embroidery. According to Dr Jürgen Kraus of the Bayrisches Armeemuseum, Ingolstadt, the original drawing for the lace was so imprecise that many variations are known. This undress or service version of the field-marshal's baton was known as an *Interimstab*. (Author's collection)

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ISBN 1-84176-558-9

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